Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library
BS630 .S978
Swinnerton, H. H. (Henry Hurd), 1MAIN
The lands behind the Bible story ...
3 9967 00101 3304

THE

BEHIND

THE

BIBLE STORY

H. H. SWINNERTON, F.G.S., &c.

Accession Number 47980. Shelf Number BS 630 S 978

The Virginia Library

McCormick

Theological Seminary

of the

Presbyterian Church, Chicago

826 Belden Avenue

From

Received Mar. 1920

THE LANDS BEHIND THE BIBLE STORY

BY

H. H. SWINNERTON, D.Sc., F.G.S., F.Z.S.

Professor of Geology and Geography, University College, Nottingham

With Diagrams and Outline Maps

[illegible]

LONDON:
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION
57 AND 59, LUDGATE HILL, E.C.4

1913

VIRGINIA LIBRARY
MCCORMICK
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

6 30
S97

CONTENTS.

PART I.

PAGE

A General Survey of the Bible Lands
Their Position in the World 9
The Desert Setting 11
The Lands among the Mountains 14
The Lands by Great Rivers 16
The Lands by the Great Sea 20
The Old Testament Highways... 24
The New Testament Highways... 28

PART II.

A Detailed Study of the Bible Lands
Section 1. *The Early Civilised World* 33
The Land of the Morning Stories 35
Pharaoh's Dreamland 37
Camels and Caravans 39
Assyria 43
Section 2. *The Land of Promise*
Abraham's Habitat 49
Across Canaan 51
The Story of the Jordan Valley 55
The Land of the Patriarchs 58
Section 3. *The Conquest of the Land*
Joshua's Strategy 65
The Philistine Borders 68
Israel's Battleground 70
David's Kingdom Established 73
Section 4. *Daily Life in the New Country*
Summer and Winter 79
Rocks and Springs 82
Jotham's Parable 84
The Field of Boaz 86
Scenery and Religion 89
Section 5. *The Nations on the Syrian Bridge*
The Land of Cedars 93
David's Kingdom Divided 95
Damascus 98
David's City 100

PAGE

SECTION 6. *The Later Civilisations*
Around the Ægean Sea 105
Around the Mediterranean 108

SECTION 7. *The Widening Way* ...
Nazareth 113
The Sea and City of Capernaum 115
Antioch 119
Ephesus 121
The Paths of the Sea 124
The Uttermost Parts of the Earth 126

MAPS AND DIAGRAMS.

Fig. 1. Map showing the position of Bible lands in the Ancient World 10
,, 2. Map of the Distribution of Vegetation in Bible Lands 12
,, 3. Map showing the Surface Configuration of Bible Lands 12
,, 4. Map of the Syrian Bridge 21
,, 5. Map of the Old Testament Highways ... 24
,, 6. Map of the New Testament Highways ... 29
,, 7. Diagram showing the Physical Characteristics of Palestine 52
,, 8. Diagram showing the Surface Configuration of Palestine 56
,, 9. Map of Shechem and Samaria 61
,, 10. Map of the Passes of Benjamin 66
,, 11. Map of the Scene of David's Fight with Goliath 70
,, 12. Map of the Scene of Gideon's Exploit and of Saul's last Battle 72
,, 13. The Hebrew Kingdoms in Relation to the Main Trade Routes 74
,, 14. The Circle of the Seasons in Palestine ... 80
,, 15. The Distribution of Underground Water in Palestine 83
,, 16. Map of the Site of Jerusalem and Its Surroundings 100
,, 17. Greece and the Roman Empire 106
,, 18. Map of the Galilean Gate 117
,, 19. Map of Ephesus and Environs at the time of Paul's Visit 122
,, 20. The Roman Empire and Its Natural Boundaries 127

PREFACE.

THIS book is an attempt to trace in a simple manner the geographical influences which weave themselves into and around the Bible story. The subject is so vast that it seems futile to attempt to deal with it on so small a scale. On the other hand some insight into it is essential to an intelligent appreciation of the Bible story, the teaching of which is still the most important medium for imparting spiritual knowledge to young people. It is hoped, therefore, that the book will be helpful to parents as well as to day-school and Sunday-school teachers.

The word Story is used as opposed to History. Even legends grow up in a definite geographical setting, and a knowledge of the one will help towards an appreciation of the beauty and truth in the other.

Part I. contains a survey intended to supply the teacher with that general background of knowledge which he must possess in order to see his isolated lessons in their true perspective.

In Part II. each sub-section does no more than suggest material for one or two lessons.

The author makes no pretensions to a first-hand knowledge of the lands. All the material herein

contained has been culled from the writings of others, and the main burden of his debt he owes to those of Dr. Geo. Adam Smith and Prof. W. M. Ramsay. In the chapter on Nazareth, the influence of Mr. T. R. Glover's delightful book, "The Jesus of History," is very evident.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. A. J. Grinling for making a careful study of the manuscript, and for giving me the benefit of his wide knowledge of the subject, and his long experience as a Sunday-school worker.

H. H. S.

PART I.

A General Survey of the Bible Lands.

THEIR POSITION IN THE WORLD.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa . . . behold there came wise men from the east" (Matt. ii. 1). Joseph "arose and took the young child and his mother . . . and departed into Egypt" (ver. 14). Thus, at the opening of the New Testament story, all the lands of the Old Testament are linked together around the infant Jesus.

The wanderings of Paul, the traveller, bring to our view yet other lands, which were only dimly seen through the Old Testament story. He dreamed of going as far as Spain (Rom. xv. 24), but his journeyings were confined mainly to Asia Minor and the peninsula of Greece.

These, then, are the chief lands behind the Bible Story:—The East, Canaan, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece.

These lands are situated at the heart of the greatest mass of land on the earth's surface; in the region where Europe, Asia, and Africa are joined together. Here, also, three great barriers to the free movement of mankind—mountain, sea, and desert—cross one another, and are broken in the process.

The mountain barrier includes such familiar ranges as the Alps and the Himalayas. Starting on the Atlantic coast it traverses Southern Europe. As it strikes along Asia Minor and the East it broadens out and rises, by a succession of mountain ranges and plateaus, to the Pamir plateau, the "Roof of the World."

The sea barrier begins as an unbroken belt, the

Mediterranean. At its eastern end it breaks into a number of fragments - the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf --which almost encircle the Bible Lands, and except for comparatively narrow land bridges, cut them off from connection with the world beyond.

The desert barrier has its broadest expanse, as the Sahara, in North Africa. Passing eastwards it, also, is shattered where it crosses the sea and mountains; but it can be traced to northern India and to

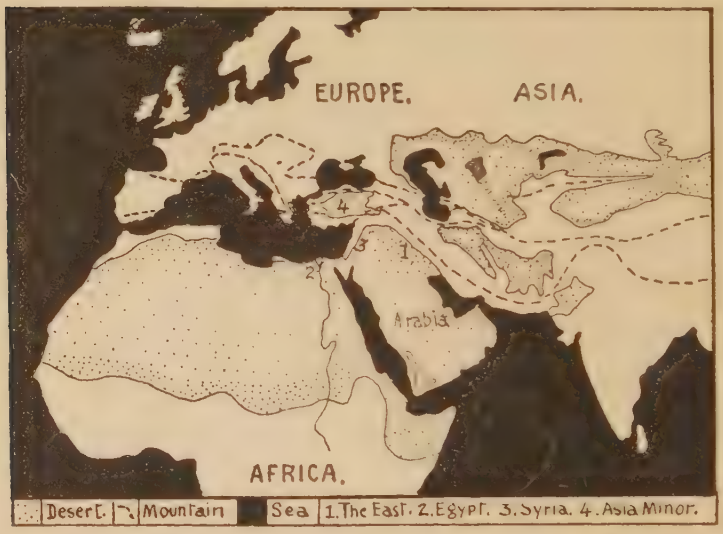

FIG. 1. MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF BIBLE LANDS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD.

Central Asia. In summer time this band of deserts contains the hottest places upon the earth's surface, and has an average temperature of 90F. in July.

The peninsulas of Greece and Asia Minor lie in the mountain zone. The other lands lie in the desert zone, and are merely great oases. They have been rescued from the desert by rivers born in the mountains (Cp. Ezek. xlvii. 9, 12) or by rain-bearing winds from off the sea (Deut. xi. 11).

From time immemorial these oases have been the meeting-places for the races of mankind (Gen. xi. 9), as they have migrated from land to land. It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, that, when history dawns, these lands, situated as they are at the cross roads of the Old World, are already the homes of great and mighty civilised peoples. These peoples, on the one hand, and the deserts on the other, give the dominant tones and colours to the background of Scripture pictures.

THE DESERT SETTING.

The Bible Lands are set in a tangle of mountains, sea, and desert; but it is the desert which exercises the most marked influence upon the Bible story. All through the Old Testament, and the earlier portions of the New Testament, glimpses of desert scenery are caught in the background (Is. xxxv. 1, 6, 7), a desert atmosphere often envelops the actors (Ex. iii. 1-3); and it is the camel, the symbol of the desert, which bears the traveller across the stage (Gen. xxiv. 61).

The explanation for this is not far to seek; for between the East, and Canaan and Egypt lie the vast stretches of the Syrian Desert, which itself is merely the northern portion of that which occupies the whole of the Arabian Peninsula.

The surface configuration of this desert is comparatively simple. At the head of the Red Sea it occupies a lofty plateau 4,000 feet high, which sends a narrow and broken extension northwards through the land of Canaan to the mountains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. From this axis of high ground the land declines on either side. On the west it descends slowly to the lowlands around and beyond Egypt, or rapidly to the shores of the Mediterranean

FIG. 2. MAP OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF VEGETATION IN BIBLE LANDS.

FIG. 3. MAP SHOWING THE SURFACE CONFIGURATION OF BIBLE LANDS.

Sea. On the east it falls still more slowly towards the Persian Gulf, or the low-lying plains at the foot of the mountain belt.

The desert is essentially monotonous. Month after month the sky is almost cloudless (Cp. I. Kin. xviii. 43, 44); the sun rises and sets blood-red, and its rays beat down pitilessly (Is. xlix. 10) upon the traveller throughout the day. The heat is intense, and both man and beast merely toil on and endure. At night the heat dissipates rapidly, and the air becomes cool or even icy cold.

Over great expanses the outlook may be merely sand-hills and ever-shifting sand; or it may be so thickly covered with stones, and strewn with boulders, that the camel must pick its way with care. These types of surface are dependent for their existence upon the nature of the underlying rock.

Occasionally, and at wide intervals, rain falls (Hos. xiii. 5). It may stand in pools and gradually sink or evaporate away; or, collecting in sand-choked water-courses, it may gather sufficient volume to form a short-lived torrent, which loses itself eventually in a salt marsh (Ps. cvii. 34; Ezek. xlvii. 11) or a sandy waste.

With such a scanty supply of water, vegetation is naturally sparse; trees are quite absent; small scrubby plants, with long thick roots which penetrate to great depths in the soil and rock in search of water, are dotted here and there at wide intervals. When rain does come a beautiful carpet of small plants, of grasses, and flowering bulbs, springs suddenly into being. "The desert blossoms as the rose" (Is. xxxv. 1, 2). All too soon the flowers fade, seeds ripen and are shed, the sun scorches the leaves, "the wind passeth over it, and it is gone" (Ps. ciii. 16). In such places camels alone can find pasture and subsist.

There are, of course, degrees of desert. Where the underground water-supply increases shrubs become more numerous, and a scrub desert, or wilderness (Gen. xxi. 15; Is. lv. 13; xli. 19) prevails. Where a more plentiful rain-fall comes at regular seasons, desert passes into semi-desert and steppe-land. Here the pasturage is rich enough to support flocks of sheep, horses and asses (Exod. iii. 1); but it is not sufficient at any one spot for all the year. The people, therefore, must be nomads; and roam from place to place, from desert to semi-desert, and steppe, and back again, according to the season, seeking new pastures.

Here and there, owing to the presence of a deep valley, or some local peculiarity in the arrangement of the rocks, water springs to the surface, or comes sufficiently near to it to be reached by digging wells (Gen. xxvi. 17, 18). (Fig. 15, p. 83). At such spots oases occur. If these are small, they may serve as resting stages, or watering places, for travellers and caravans. If they are large they become the homes of a settled population, which cultivates the soil in addition to keeping flocks and herds. To these the nomads come for food, and to barter their camels and the produce of their flocks, for household utensils and weapons. In the Syrian desert such oases are rare, and the nomads are driven to the fertile lands along its fringe – to the East, to Egypt, and to Syria, in search of a market for their goods.

THE LANDS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

The mountain belt, with its upland plateaus, enters but little into the Bible story, until the later stories of both the Old and the New Testaments. Its inhabitants are more settled than those of the desert; for the mountains catch the rains and snows,

so that the valleys are well watered and fertile. On the other hand the peoples are more broken up, and isolated from one another.

The mountain belt attains its greatest height (Fig. 3), in a complex of ranges and volcanoes between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, around Mount Ararat. Here, for four months of the year, even the mountain passes are closed by snow. Here, also, a number of great rivers, including the Euphrates and Tigris, have their sources, and draw an unfailing supply.

South-eastwards from the Ararat cluster, the ranges become unravelled, and the broad upland valleys of Media (II. Kin. xvii. 6), well-watered and fertile, open out between them. Still further, in the same direction (Esther i. 3), lies Persia, where the valleys open out into extensive upland plains, which in late geological times were occupied by inland seas. To-day, because they are sheltered from the rain-bearing winds by mountain walls on either side, these plains are occupied by terrible deserts and salt marshes (Fig. 2). Here and there, however, a snow-fed mountain stream breaks forth on to the edge of the plain, and, ere it is lost in the sands, forms a fertile oasis, whereon in ancient times there flourished a prosperous Persian city (Cp. Est. i. 14).

Westwards of Ararat, the mountains spread out once more, and enclose well-watered upland valleys and plains. This region is Asia Minor, and as a whole is covered by pastures and cultivable land.

Still further westwards, the whole belt declines in elevation, until at last it plunges beneath the Ægean Sea (Figs. 17, 19, pp. 106, 122). The ridges and peaks become peninsulas and islands, and the valleys become inlets. On the further side they rise once more, but with a north to south trend, to form the Greek peninsula. Thus the Ægean Sea is dotted

with islands (Est. x. 1); and surrounded by an irregular coastline, whose inlets provide easy access to the interior of both countries. Here in these fertile valleys, which were so open on the seaward and closed in on the landward sides, there grew up cities having a remarkable civilisation, the Greek civilisation. To the peoples that inhabited them the sea was the natural highway for commerce and intercourse. It is when Paul is bringing the good news to these cities that such phrases as "set sail" (Acts xx. 13) become for the first time familiar ones in Bible story.

Where the southern margin of the mountain belt comes down to the Mediterranean Sea it forms a shore line, which on the whole is steep, with here and there deltaic plains, such as those of Pamphylia and Cilicia. Eastwards it declines into a zone of foothill country (Num. xxiii. 7; Gen. xxix. 1), with fertile pastures and wooded slopes, facing on to the Syrian Desert with its grassland fringes; or on to the lowlands of Mesopotamia. It was in this belt that Paul at Tarsus (Acts xi. 25), and Abram at Haran (Gen. xi. 31), spent their early years, and that the Assyrians and the Elamites had their homes.

THE LANDS BY GREAT RIVERS.

All the land south of the mountain belt belongs to the desert; but long strips of it have been rescued by the presence of three great rivers, the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris (Figs. 2, 3). These draw their water supply from regions beyond the desert and, as they cross the arid wastes, bring life whithersoever they come.

The Nile (Gen. xli. 1), one of the three longest rivers in the world, rises in the equatorial regions of Africa and, after flowing northwards for about 3,500

miles, enters the Mediterranean Sea. It draws a constant supply from the great lakes of Central Africa; but every summer it rises gradually into flood, owing to the accession of an additional supply caused by the melting snows and the monsoon rains in Abyssinia. For the lower one thousand six hundred miles of its course it flows across the desert, and receives no tributaries.

The last seven hundred and sixty miles of the river, and the country it flows through, are self-contained; for they are separated from the upper reaches by a long stretch where rapids and cataracts abound, and where the desert comes down to the banks of the river itself. This stretch makes a break in the lines of easy communication along both the river and its banks. This self-contained region is Egypt.

In Egypt the Nile has two distinct parts. The longer part—in Upper Egypt—has a single channel flowing along a trench-like valley varying in width from ten to twenty miles. On either side are steep and rocky cliffs, which rise to the level of the desert plateau. The valley floor is a narrow plain bearing luxuriant crops (Gen. xli. 5), and verdant pastures (Gen. xli. 2).

The shorter part—in Lower Egypt—is only about one hundred and sixty miles long, and divided in ancient times into seven channels, which spread out fan-fashion, and opened into the sea separately. On each side the hills recede from the river, and the narrow valley opens out into the fenlands of the delta. From the earliest times known the delta has been cultivated, except where, on its seaward side, it passes over into marshes and swampy lagoons. East and West, it merged into grassland and steppe, and beyond that into desert. In the steppe on the east was the land of Goshen (Gen. xlvii. 1-6).

Egypt was thus separated from the world by deserts on either side, by cataracts up-stream, and by marshes and sea down-stream. Thus protected from the frequent assaults of foes, the people were free to develop the resources of their land. Unfailing sunshine and water supply and very fertile soil were theirs. Their food was easy to get, and they therefore had leisure to practise the arts of civilisation. Though the country was very long and very narrow, internal communication was easy; for the river formed a natural highway, down which their boats floated with the stream, or up which they were wafted by the strong prevailing winds from the north.

When Abram, in the course of his wanderings, came to Egypt (Gen. xii. 10), he found there a great civilisation, which had already been in existence several milleniums.

The twin rivers, Euphrates and Tigris (Gen. ii. 14), belong to the East. They rise among the snowy heights around Ararat. At first they flow for long stretches west and east along the valleys of the mountain belt; then they turn sharply southwards and, after piercing the lofty bordering ranges by narrow gorges and defiles, flow rapidly across the foothills and the upland plain of the Syrian desert. These hills, and the adjoining uplands, once formed the shores of the Persian Gulf, which then extended much further inland than it does to-day. But these rivers, and many other smaller ones, which are now tributaries, gradually silted up the head of the Gulf, and converted it into a lowland plain (Gen. xi. 2). Across this the two greater rivers, with the smaller ones as tributaries, now wander; and, after uniting, flow to the sea through marshy deltaic flats.

This plain, Babylonia, like that of the Nile, offered special advantages to the earliest races which

settled upon it. Here as in Egypt the soil was extraordinarily fertile (Gen. ii. 8, 9), and could be made to yield abundant crops, because the country was bathed in perpetual sunshine, and was furnished with an unfailing water-supply.

But this plain was much broader in proportion to its length, and therefore supported a more compactly distributed population. Here, also, a civilisation, the Babylonian, arose as great and as ancient as that of Egypt: but it was subjected to greater vicissitudes, for whilst it was partially shielded on the west by desert, on the east and north it was harassed by nations (the Elamites and Assyrians) whose homes were in the foothills, and in later days by the Medes and the Persians, who lived on the upland plateaus beyond (Dan. v. 28).

The valleys of the foothills were fertile and well-watered by two groups of streams. The one flowed into the upper reaches of the Tigris; the other into the head of the Gulf. In the region watered by the latter group lay the kingdom of Elam (Dan. viii. 2), one of whose kings, Chedorlaomer, appears in the story of Abram (Gen. xiv. 1). That watered by the upper group became the homeland of Assyria, a nation whose military ambitions hover like a nightmare (Is. xxxvii. 18) over certain Old Testament stories.

These two nations in their turn were threatened from time to time, and were eventually overthrown by invaders who came down from Media and Persia.

It is essential to the intelligent appreciation of the Old Testament story that the existence of these great riverside peoples, highly skilled in agriculture and commerce, in science and industry, in government and warfare, be always kept in mind.

THE LANDS BY THE GREAT SEA.

In only one region does the great Arabian desert reach to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Fig. 3). This lies east of Egypt and Goshen, and stretches along the coast for the distance of about one hundred and fifty miles. Elsewhere this sea and desert are separated by a fertile strip of country extending northwards for 400 miles to the mountains of Asia Minor. This narrow strip, (Fig. 4), which is as long as from London to Inverness, and usually only fifty to eighty miles wide, is Syria. Of this Canaan was a part.

Syria is saved from being desert by the winter rains brought by the moisture-laden winds from off the sea (Deut. xi. 11). The distilling of these rains upon the land is determined by the slope, which rises some 2,000 feet—4,000 feet from the sea to the plateau of Arabia.

The character of this slope differs in its northern, central, and southern portions, and influences both the quantity and the distribution of the rains.

Northern Syria lies between the sea and that part of the Euphrates, only ninety miles away, which is traversing the foothills and upland plateau. Whilst the loftier ranges, from which the river has broken free, continue westwards to form the steep southern margin of Asia Minor, the foothills, following the same general direction, sink to sea level, and give rise to a moderately indented coastline, with its inlets silted up to a large extent to form such deltaic plains as that of Cilicia. Valleys pass inland, and provide easy access from these coast plains, with their cities, to the river lands of the East.

Southwards of northern Syria the rocks of the Arabian plateau, as it approaches the sea, become

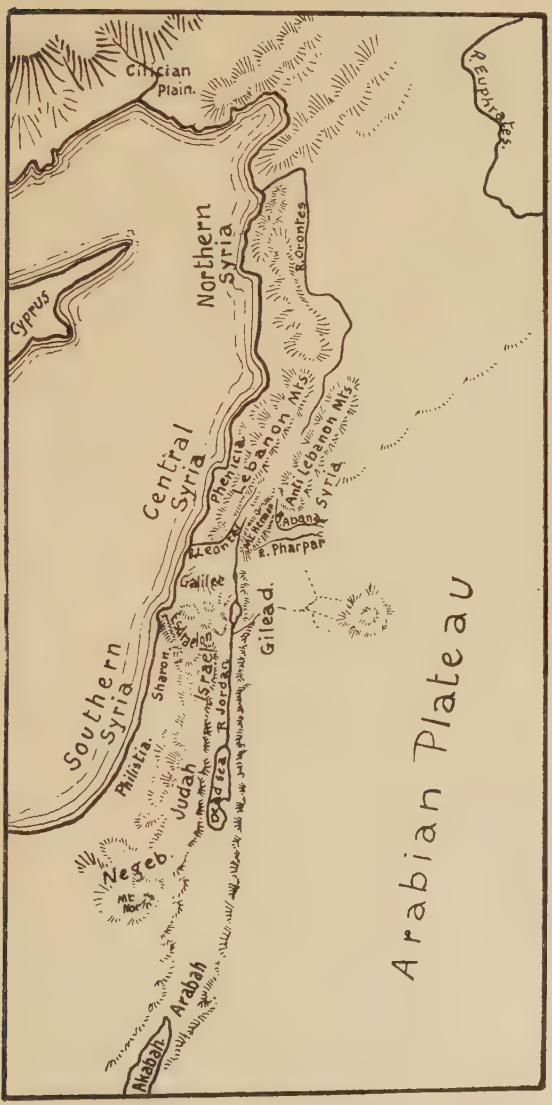

FIG. 4. MAP OF THE SYRIAN BRIDGE.

buckled up along two lines parallel to the coast. The west and east mountain ranges thus formed act as further barriers to the communication between the peoples by the sea and the peoples beyond the desert.

In Central Syria these barriers attain their maximum elevation, for a distance of nearly two hundred miles, in the mountains of Lebanon which face the sea, and those of Anti-Lebanon which look down upon the desert. Between the Lebanons and the sea the coast lands, though narrow, formed the homeland of the Phœnicians, with their great seaport cities of Tyre and Sidon. Sheltered by the mountains from hostile invaders, who swarmed so frequently over northern and southern Syria, they became wealthy on the profits of their industries and their extensive sea-borne trade (Ezek. xxvii. 3).

Between these mountains is a broad valley (I. Kin. viii. 65) in which the head waters of four rivers flow (Song of Songs iv. 15). Two, the Orontes and Leontes flowing northwards and southwards respectively, cut their way, eventually, through the ends of the Lebanon range and so find their way into the sea. The other two rivers flow inland. The Abana (II. Kin. v. 12) pierces the companion range on the East, and flows out into, and becomes lost in, the desert beyond. On the oasis, which arose in consequence, Damascus flourished from before Abraham Gen. xiv. 15) until after Paul (Acts ix. 25) and still continues. The fourth river, the Jordan, rises on the flanks of Mount Hermon (Ps. cxxxiii. 3), the southernmost peak of the eastern range. It flows southwards into southern Syria, better known as Canaan and Palestine. The valley—the Arabah (R.V. Deut. iv. 49) -in which it flows is one of the most remarkable on the earth. At one point, near the middle of its course, its floor sinks to the profound depth of two thousand six hundred feet below the

level of the sea (Fig. 8, p. 56). In this hollow lie the waters of the Dead Sea (Gen. xiv. 3; R.V. Ezek. xlvii. 3), whose surface is still about twelve hundred and ninety feet below sea level. South of the Dead Sea the valley floor rises until it is well above that level once more. From that point it descends to the Red Sea gradually, and passing onwards becomes the Gulf of Akabah.

The West and East ranges rise by precipitous (Matt. viii. 32) and terraced slopes from the floor of the Arabah valley. But, though they are the natural continuation of the Lebanons and the Anti-Lebanons, they do not rise above the level of the Arabian plateau. At one point the Western range is broken by the Plain of Esdraelon and the valleys of Lower Galilee. Here, therefore, is a natural gateway across the range from the sea-coast to the Jordan valley, the floor of which is here rising to the sea-level. The Eastern range also reaches its minimum elevation in this same region, to the north of Gilead.

Between the Western range and the coast is a plain, which is cut off from Esdraelon by the narrow spur of Mount Carmel. The part adjoining this spur is the plain of Sharon (Is. xxxv. 2), only six or seven miles wide. Southwards it broadens out, and passes first into the plain of Philistia, then into the desert by the sea, and finally merges into Goshen and Lower Egypt.

Syria, like Egypt, is a long narrow country, but it has no unifying feature like the Nile and its valley. On the contrary, its surface is broken, and its features run this way and that. Consequently, it was never united, not even in David's day, into one kingdom; and was usually occupied by a number of small kingdoms, e.g., Judah, Israel, Phœnicia and "Syria," now friendly, now at war, with one another.

THE OLD TESTAMENT HIGHWAYS.

Throughout Old Testament times the main centres of civilisation were along the banks of the Nile in the west, and those of the Lower Euphrates and Tigris in the east. These widely separated peoples were in frequent communication with one another (Cp. Gen. xi. 31; xii. 4, 6, 10). Usually

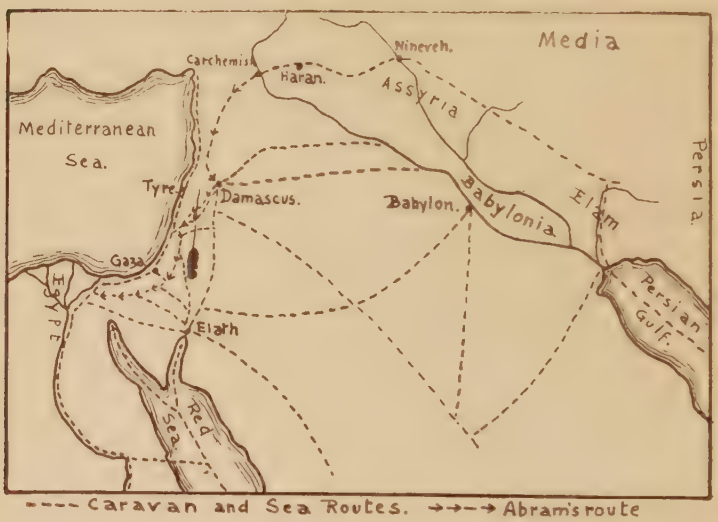

FIG. 5. MAP OF THE OLD TESTAMENT HIGHWAYS.

their intercourse was peaceable, and concerned chiefly with trade and social amenities; but sometimes it became warlike, and took the form of raiding expeditions (Gen. xiv. 1, 2; Jer. xlvi. 2) into one another's territory, or recognised spheres of influence.

Between these great peoples lay a vast expanse of desert, seven hundred miles wide, the Syrian Desert (Fig. 2), and its small isolated portion in the peninsula of Sinai. Across this arid waste trading

caravans (Gen. xxxvii. 25, 28) wended their way from oasis to waterhole, and waterhole to oasis. The difficulties of such a journey were so great that only a small trickle of commerce flowed along these routes. Their chief value was that they tapped the trade of the scattered populations that cultivated the large oases of central Arabia. The position of Babylon (Dan. iv. 30) was determined by the convergence of such desert routes upon the Euphrates.

The essence of profitable commerce was that caravans should, as far as possible, follow lines along which the places for replenishing the food stores, for getting water, and for doing trade, were scattered at short intervals. Now Syria, by reason of its fertility, supplied such a line of travel between the two countries. At its northern end it merges into the Euphrates basin (Cp. I. Chron. v. 9). At its southern end it is separated from Egypt (Cp. I. Kin. viii. 65) by only a small stretch of desert, not more than one hundred and fifty miles wide.

The arrangement of the hills, valleys, and plains of Syria lends itself to the establishment of easy lines of communication along the length of the land (Fig. 13, p. 74). Egypt and Syria, on the one hand, and the Euphrates valley, on the other, are thus related to one another as are the limbs of the letter **A.** The apex of the letter carried the Egyptian traveller rather too far north out of his way, but a striking conjunction of natural features midway provided a short cut, from one route to the other, similar to the cross piece of the letter. At this point the western range is broken by the plain of Esdraelon, and the valleys of Lower Galilee; the Jordan valley rises almost to sea level just north of a freshwater lake, the Sea of Galilee; and the eastern range sinks to its lowest level in the region north of Gilead. Thus there was provided a natural gateway across Syria,

from the coastal plain to the oasis of Damascus. This may be called the Galilean Gate.

From Egypt three main caravan routes went eastwards. The "Way of the Red Sea" (Exod. xiii. 18) struck across the desert to the head of the Gulf of Akabah at Elath, and tapped the trade of Central Arabia. From Elath one route went north along the Jordan valley, another and more important one ascended to the Eastern range or margin of the Arabian plateau and went due north past Moab and Gilead to Damascus.

The second route from Egypt—the "Way of Shur" (Gen. xvi. 7)—curved in a north-easterly direction towards the southern end of the western range. This it traversed lengthwise, keeping to the crest, and passed Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, on its way to Shechem. Here it divided, sending one branch north to the plain of Esdraelon; and the other east, down the Wady Farah (Fig. 9, p. 61), across Jordan, up the valley of the Jabbok (Gen. xxxii. 22; xxxiii. 18), to join eventually the route from Elath to Damascus described above.

The last but most important route from Egypt was the "Way of the Philistines" (Exod. xiii. 17). This hugged the coast line across the desert, and after passing Raphia and Gaza, pursued its course along the plains of Philistia and Sharon, with their numerous cities. As it approached the ridge-like spur of Carmel it broke into four branches; one rounded the peninsula of Carmel by the sea-beach and continued to Tyre, Sidon and beyond; the other three crossed the ridge by passes. Of the latter, the one which traversed the broad valley of Dothan (Gen. xxxvii. 18, 25) is the most familiar, but the one which went to Megiddo was the most important (I. Kin. ix. 15). From Megiddo the main route crossed

the plain of Esdraelon, and the hills of Lower Galilee, and passing the Sea of Galilee by its northern end, pursued a direct course to Damascus. Other routes there were of considerable local importance, but the ones just described were the chief ones followed by through traffic.

Just as Damascus (Ezek. xxvii. 18) was the meeting-place for the system of routes from Egypt and the Syrian coast, so also was it the starting-point for a similar system leading to Assyria, Babylonia, and the East. The shortest of these struck across the northern angle of the Syrian desert, passing through the oasis of Tadmor (II. Chron. viii. 4) to the Euphrates. A much more frequented route followed the Abana river nearly to its source, and then, entering the valley of the Orontes, descended this as far as Hamath (II. Chron. viii. 3). From this city it struck eastwards, across the pasture lands of northern Syria by two routes to the banks of the Euphrates, whence goods could be taken down the river on rafts, or along roads, to Babylonia. The more northerly of the two crossed the river at Carchemish (Jer. xlvi. 2) and, traversing the foothill country through Haran, came to Nineveh, thus practically following the route now taken by the Baghdad Railway.

Thus commerce between Egypt and the East flowed through Canaan chiefly along the coast route, which may be conveniently referred to as the Great North Road.

Cities naturally developed at intervals along these roads, and traded the produce of their own districts for that of distant lands. Those cities, such as Gaza, Beersheba, and Damascus, which were situated where the routes left or entered the desert, assumed great importance as desert ports; for here the caravans stayed a longer time in order to replenish

their stores more fully, after and before crossing the desert. Moreover, it was to such places that the nomads of the semi-desert resorted, to barter their wool and their camels for weapons and domestic utensils.

These lines of commercial prosperity were the natural raiding grounds for the kings of Egypt and of the East; and the cities (Is. x. 9) along them were usually under tribute to one or the other.

In the later days of the Hebrew monarchies a number of great battles between the nations were fought on or close to the Great North Road. In the reign of Ahab a battle between the Assyrians and a confederacy of small nations was fought at Karkar, near to Hamath. The battle of Raphia, between Assyria and Egypt, was fought south of Gaza, in the reign of Hezekiah. Josiah, daring to confront Pharaoh Necho who was going north to extend his sway, was defeated at Megiddo. Pharaoh himself shared a like fate at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar two years later at Carchemish (II. Chron. xxxv. 20).

At rare intervals the kings of Egypt and the East were preoccupied with difficulties at home. It was in such intervals that David and later Israelitish kings extended their sway until it reached from Elath (I. Kin. ix. 26) on the south almost to Carchemish (I. Kin. iv. 24) in the north; and that the Israelites grew rich upon the stream of trade which they thus came to control.

THE NEW TESTAMENT HIGHWAYS.

During the period between the restoration of the Temple and the birth of Christ five centuries elapsed, and great changes took place. The older Eastern civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia continued; but they were absorbed, first into the Per-

sian, then into the Greek (I. Maccab. i. 1-10), and finally into the Roman empire.

The Persian Empire had already begun to loom up in the background, in the closing scenes of the Old Testament story. Established by Cyrus (Ezra. i. 1) and extended by Cambyses and Darius (Ezra. iv. 5), it stretched from the Ægean Sea to Northern

FIG. 6. MAP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HIGHWAYS.

India (Est. i. 1), and included Egypt, Syria and Babylonia. It was controlled from Shushan (Neh. i. 1; Es. i. 2), a city in the hilly country east of Babylonia which had been the kingdom of the Elamites. A good system of roads was organised, the most famous of which was the Royal Road, which traversed nearly the whole length of the empire.

The Greek civilisation had its headquarters around the Ægean Sea, and reached its climax before that of Rome. Its method of empire building was new; for as the Greeks conquered one region after another they built many new cities and colonised them with Greek citizens. Thus the conquered regions were enriched.

The Roman empire had its headquarters in one

city—Rome, and reached the acme of its power later. As it extended its influence over the whole of that ancient world it absorbed, and protected, the Greek civilisation. With greater military and organising genius, the Romans established a more stable empire, surrounded by frontiers which formed for centuries barriers to the hordes of savages beyond. Within these frontiers peace reigned, and commerce and industry, science and art, literature and travel, flourished.

Geographically the civilised world of the New Testament differed from that of the Old in that its parts were separated, not by desert, but by sea; and Rome was near the centre of that sea—the Mediterranean. Thus it came about, that, in these later times, the paths across the sea were as important as the routes over the land. From Rome land and sea routes radiated to all parts of the empire, but it is only the eastern half that lies behind the Gospel stories.

All the Old Testament highways were still of importance; but now their centre of convergence had shifted from the ancient city of Damascus to the newly built city of Antioch (Acts. xi. 20) in northern Syria. This new centre lay at the apex of the **A** previously referred to. The shifting of the centre was due to the establishment of a land route connecting the lands of the Old Testament with the new commercial and industrial areas around the Ægean Sea, and with Rome. This road (Fig. 6), after leaving Antioch, turned the corner of the Mediterranean and came to Tarsus (Acts. xv. 41). Thence it struck across the Taurus Mountains through the remarkable gorge called the Cilician Gates, and entered the uplands of Asia Minor (Acts. xvi. 1). Following the grain of the country westwards, it avoided the deserts on the north, and the mountains which

separated it from the sea on the south, and came eventually to the head of one of the great valleys which lead down to the Ægean coast. Here it forked near to Laodicea (Rev. i. 11). One branch continued westwards to Ephesus (Acts xix. 1) and the sea. Thence the journey to Rome was continued by sea, with a short break to Corinth (Acts. xviii. 1). The other branch turned north-west (Acts xvi. 8), and after crossing the Dardanelles, became the great highway through Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 1) and Macedonia (Acts xvi. 12), to the shores of the Adriatic, and now a very short sea voyage sufficed to bring the traveller to Italy, at a port now called Brindisi. This route, the Egnatian Way, had its advantages in winter, when nearly all sea-borne traffic ceased, but the Ephesus-Corinth route was equally important.

There were two main types of vessel for traversing the sea. One was a small coasting type, which did not go far enough out to sea to lose sight of land. This type swarmed in the Ægean Sea, with its innumerable islands and inlets and cities. Some of these ships went further afield, and, hugging (Acts xx. 13-15; xxi. 1; xxvii. 2) the coast of Asia Minor and of Syria, they plied between Troas and Alexandria.

A larger type was to be found at Alexandria, which was the most important port in the Eastern Mediterranean; for in addition to being the outlet for the corn and other produce of Egypt, it gathered up most of the commerce between the Mediterranean lands, and Arabia, India and beyond. The finest vessels then known issued from this port. Some of them were capable of carrying six hundred passengers, and they regularly ventured out into the open sea.

Their course was, however, largely determined

by the prevailing westerly direction of the winds, which enabled them to make a direct and rapid voyage from Rome to Alexandria, but on the return journey (Acts xxvii. 6) forced them to sail north, to the coast of Asia Minor. Creeping westwards along this they eventually crossed the Ægean Sea, north of Crete, and then, after rounding the peninsula of Greece, they made for the straits of Messina, and so came to Puteoli (Acts xxviii. 13), the port of disembarkation for Rome. It was in one of these vessels that Paul took his last recorded journey.

PART II.

A Detailed Study of the Bible Lands.

SECTION I.

The Early Civilised World.

THE LAND OF THE MORNING STORIES.

THE early stories of Genesis have been aptly called the Morning Stories of the Bible. Careful reading shows that the first tellers of these stories belonged to a highly civilised people that did not live in Palestine. They knew enough about astronomy to be familiar with the sun, moon and stars as signs for fixing seasons, days and years (Gen. i. 14). They were skilled cultivators of the soil, for they produced from it herbs yielding seed and trees yielding fruit (Gen. i. 12). They had such domesticated animals as cattle (Gen. i. 24). Unlike savage races they were freed from the fear of wild beasts, for they knew what it was to have dominion over them (Gen. i. 26, 28). They made musical instruments, forged cutting tools of brass and iron (Gen. iv. 22), were expert in carpentering (Gen. vi. 14, 16), in brick-making (Gen. xi. 3), in building (Gen. xi. 4; iv. 17).

This people, clearly a civilised people, had its home in Babylonia, the land adjoining the lower reaches of two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris (Hiddekel, Gen. ii. 14). To this day this land is dotted with flat-topped mounds, the graves of mighty cities. Some of these have been excavated by modern explorers, who have thus unearthed the records of that ancient civilisation, and have learned that it was already hoary with age before Abraham appeared upon the scene.

Though its rulers changed, the civilisation itself lasted for many centuries longer; so that as late as

the opening of the New Testament wise men were coming from the east (Matt. ii. 1, 11).

Babylonia, the land of Shinar (Gen. x. 10) is a broad plain, which was formed in past ages by the silting up of the head of the Persian Gulf with the mud brought down in the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris. In its natural state much of the plain was marshy. During the summer, from May to August, as the accumulated snows of winter melted at their sources, these rivers swelled to such an extent that they flooded large portions of the plain (Gen. vii. 20).

The Babylonians, however, overcame these difficulties to a large extent. They constructed a complex system of canals to enable them to control the flood-waters, and to drain the land more quickly. But even then the floods troubled them, and so they built great platforms of sun-dried bricks to a height above ordinary flood level. On these they erected their palaces and temples (Gen. xi. 4). Bricks were used; for stone is not to be found anywhere in the plain, but mud and clay abound.

These natural disadvantages were more than counterbalanced by the fertility of the soil (Gen. ii. 8, 9). This could be used to the fullest extent because the climate was hot and dry. Indeed, in summer this plain is one of the hottest places in the world. On the other hand, though there is very little rain, even in the rainiest months, the coming of the floods in the summer serves to water "the whole face of the ground (Cp. Gen. ii. 6). In addition, the water was raised from the canals, and led along smaller channels to irrigate the ground. Thus, though the floods abated and rain was scarce, the ground was kept well watered bearing abundant crops of herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree yielding fruit (e.g., wheat, barley, date, pomegranate, etc.).

The ease with which food could be obtained left the people with sufficient leisure to enable them to develop those arts and sciences which advance civilisation.

Babylonia became a great commercial centre, and the products of its industry were known far and wide over the ancient world (Cp. Josh. vii. 21). In return for the goods it exported, Babylonia imported the commodities it lacked—timber and stone from the adjoining mountains, spices, frankincense, and myrrh from the outskirts of the desert.

PHARAOH'S DREAMLAND.

In Genesis, chapter forty-one, we read that Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, "In my dream, behold I stood upon the brink of the river" (Gen. xli. 17) where he had often stood and worshipped, and paid homage to the river. And well he might, for it lay at the root of all his power. Had there been no river Nile, there would have been no Pharaoh, for the land over which he ruled, with its well-favoured kine and well-filled ears of corn, would have been a burning desert. In that land of Egypt rain is a rarity, and the sun shines with nearly unbroken glory throughout the year.

There he stood overlooking an expanse of river, still broad, even though for nearly seventeen hundred miles of its course it had received no tributary. Hemmed in on either side by fearful deserts, its own waters had turned what would otherwise have been burning golden sands into emerald fields for several miles on either side.

As the Nile approached the sea it divided into seven branches, spreading out like a fan, and for more than one hundred miles fertilised a much broader extent of well cultivated country. East-

wards this plain passed into the grassy pastures of Goshen (Gen. xlvii. 6), where Jacob and his sons and their children would live, and where many of his later descendants, the Israelites, learned from the Egyptians the art of watering and tilling the soil.

About the middle of June, Pharaoh would see the waters of the sacred river become more and more muddy, and rise mysteriously day after day, until a month later it stood twenty to twenty-five feet higher than usual. Then he saw the labourers hasten to make openings in the banks, whereby they kept the flood under control, and let its waters with their fertilising mud flow over their fields. As the river subsided, and left traces of mud along its banks, or mud islands in mid-stream, they vied with one another in claiming plots where they might grow cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic (Num. xi. 5). When the waters were low, they worked hard to raise it by buckets slung on swinging poles above the level of the river's brink, and poured it into the sluices which led to their fields and gardens. Thus, with continual sunshine and an unfailing water-supply, they were independent of the seasons, and sowed their seed, raised and harvested their crops several times during the year. Other lands might be stricken with famine for want of rain, but in Egypt there was usually corn (Gen. xli. 57).

In the shallows at the river's side, well-favoured and fat buffalo-like kine wallowed, attended by little Egyptian boys. Here also grew reeds and bulrushes or papyrus (Is. xix. 6). The latter was a tall sedge ten feet high, and not at all like our familiar bulrush. When its bark was removed, a skin could which was used for paper, on which pictures were painted or drawn, or writing inscribed. By reason of the dryness of the climate, some of these have never mouldered or decayed, and have

been preserved to this day. The bark supplied material for making little boats such as that in which the baby Moses lay (Ex. ii. 3). Small boats and rafts were made by tying bundles of bulrushes together. In such small skiffs the fishermen pushed forth into midstream, and harvested fish for the market with nets and harpoons (Is. xix. 8). Larger boats were built of wood, which was imported from Phœnicia and such lands. These had tall sails, which caught the daily breeze from the north and wafted rulers and their servants up-stream through the land of dreams. Floating down-stream, similar boats brought gold and precious stones from far-off lands.

Favoured so highly by nature, the natives, and for a while the Hebrews, toiled and supported a leisured class, which included priests and rulers, and the king. These were as highly skilled in arts, industry and science as the children of the East. They used the unremunerated labours of the poor for quarrying mighty stones from the quarries in the south, transporting them down-stream, and building tombs and temples which still endure as monuments of great knowledge, great skill, and great tyranny. They also communicated freely in commerce and war (II. Chron. xxxv. 20) with Babylonia, and other distant civilisations. The trail of this intercourse is frequently seen crossing the stage of Bible stories.

CAMELS AND CARAVANS.

In the story of Joseph, we read, "And behold a travelling company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt" (Gen. xxxvii. 25). There was nothing extraordinary in this. Every time Joseph's brethren pastured their

flocks in the vale of Dothan they saw such travelling companies or caravans with their camels as a frequent occurrence. This vale was many miles away from Egypt and Babylonia, but the mere presence of a caravan there was a symbol of their civilisation, and of the wide extent of their influence.

To-day it is the railway train and steamer that convey the merchant and his merchandise from land to land. But in that ancient world, the camel was almost the only means of commercial and peaceful intercourse between the nations. No other animal, not even the horse, served the purpose so well. Only the camel could endure the scorching heat, and survive the thirst of the prolonged journeys across the deserts which separated the civilised peoples from one another. For the camel was essentially a desert animal; where horses and asses would have perished for want of food and water the camel could enjoy the luxury of a meal on dry shrubs and thorns. Moreover, when food was ample, it stored up a reserve of nourishment in its hump, and when wells and springs were available it laid up a store of nearly two gallons of water in its complicated stomach. On the strength of these supplies it could go for some days without either food or drink. Its feet consisted of thick elastic pads, so that it could walk with equal comfort on yielding sand or rough stones.

The camel was useful in other ways. Its skin was used for sandals, its hair for cloth (Matt. iii. 4), its milk for cheese, and its flesh for food. The Israelites were, however, forbidden to eat its flesh (Lev. xi. 4).

The camel of the Bible stories was the one humped camel, or dromedary, of the Arabian desert. It was bred by the nomads in herds "without number as the sand which is upon the sea shore for multitude" (Judg. vii. 12; Cp. Job xlii. 12).

There were two varieties. One moved swiftly, and could travel ten miles an hour. This was used by officials carrying urgent messages (Est. viii. 10). The other breed was of sturdier build, and travelled only three miles an hour. This was used as a beast of burden (II. Kin. viii. 9).

No doubt it was the latter kind upon which Joseph's brethren gazed as the travelling company, or caravan, of merchant men came into view in the vale of Dothan. Each camel had its load on its back, and overhanging its sides. Some of the merchant men were riding, others were walking, but all were armed ready to beat off the sudden onslaught of wild Arab tribes, whose custom it was to go raiding at certain seasons of the year.

Exchanging greetings with these wayside shepherds, the merchants discover that there is a comely lad for sale. They cause their camels to kneel down and then they settle to a leisurely and polite piece of bargaining (Cp. Gen. xxiii. 3-18). This over, the caravan starts off once more and wends its way along the vale to the Plain of Sharon. In winter or spring this plain is a veritable woodland garden, carpeted with grasses, crocuses and other flowers. In late summer the scene is completely changed, for the pastures are then scanty, and the landscape scorched.

Journeying on towards Egypt, the caravan traversed the whole length of the narrow plain by the sea, of which Sharon was the narrowest portion. The Plain of the Philistines, which may be so called though as yet the Philistines had not arrived, lay to the south of Sharon, and was about fifteen miles wide.

Here and there cities could be seen perched above the level of the plain on projecting spurs and isolated hills. Modern excavation shews that as compared with our cities these were quite small.

Thus the city of Gezer, which in later days was able to withstand the assaults of the Israelites (Josh. xvi. 10), and was still held by the Canaanites in the days of Solomon (I.Kin. ix. 16) was less than 700 yards long and 300 yards wide. It was surrounded by a wall and parapet 20 to 30 feet high and 14 feet thick. The gate was a passage 9 feet wide and 16 feet high, with massive towers on either side. In the middle of the city was an open space, provided with an altar, standing stones and other symbols of Canaanitish worship. This was the "high place" (Exod. xxiii. 24; Cp. Jer. xix. 4, 5). A good supply of water was obtained within the walls from a spring 90 feet below the ground, reached by a sloping tunnel. The roads were narrow and crooked, running between the closely crowded flat-topped houses. Various industries were carried on, including weaving (Cp. Judg. xvi. 13), carpentering and joinery (with tools of flint, bone, and bronze), making pottery, golden jewellery and charms.

From time to time this travelling-fair, to which Joseph was now attached, stopped outside a city whilst its merchants traded their goods for provisions and local produce. Thus the days went by until they came to the city of Gaza, where they stayed longer than usual, purchased extra camels for carrying extra stores of food and water, before they started on the journey across the desert, which now separated them from Egypt. It was utter desert. Morning, noon, and night, there was sand! sand! sand! beneath, and blazing, blinding, all but intolerable sunshine behind, above, before. Thus for eight days they would travel, and then, welcome sight! the pastures of Goshen, the watered fields and gardens of Egypt, and finally the busy mart, the bartering of spices and camels, and the new slave, Joseph.

This route, along which the caravan took Joseph,

was the most important of the trade routes which connected Egypt with the rest of the civilised world. Many of the routes from the nations which lay to the north and the east converged upon this one and joined it in the plain of Sharon.

All over that ancient Bible world there was a complicated network of trade and caravan routes. Where population abounded the mesh of the network was close. Everywhere there were to be found those distributors of the benefits of civilisation—camels and caravans.

ASSYRIA.

"The waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks" (Is. viii. 7). This Assyrian, "the overflowing scourge" (Is. xxviii. 15, 18), the rod of divine anger (Is. x. 5) to which Isaiah the prophet thus refers, is the great bully whose continual blustering, and sword rattling, fills so many of the middle Old Testament stories with tumults and rumours of war and heart-searching fears.

He was the offspring of quiet peaceful Babylonia. At some early time a branch of the Babylonian stock went upstream along the Tigris (Gen. x. 11). Passing the low-lying hills which bound the plain of Shinar on this side, it settled in the rolling hilly country beyond, which henceforth became known as Assyria. This range of hills was the natural boundary between Babylonia and Assyria. Close to where the Tigris crosses this boundary it receives a considerable tributary from the great mountain ranges on the north-east. This river, as it crosses the hill country, formed a natural frontier to Assyria on the south-east, and protected the young

colony from the Elamites, a warlike highland people that often troubled Babylonia.

Under the protecting wing of the motherland, and behind these sheltering frontiers, this small people developed and established cities on the banks of the Tigris. First of these was Ashur (Gen. x. 11), of the same name as the people who founded it. As they increased in strength and became independent of Babylonia they transferred their ruling centre upstream, along the Tigris, to the city of Calah, and eventually to Nineveh.

Nineveh was very great. According to the prophet, the children within her walls numbered one hundred and twenty thousand (Jonah iv. 11), and its ruins show it to have had a compass of seven miles. The ruins of this and of other Assyrian cities have been explored, and the records of the doings of this mighty people have been deciphered.

Though the land which they thus gained was not so fertile as the land of Shinar, it was nevertheless fertile enough to reward their effort and to yield good returns for the labour spent on irrigating it from the mountain streams. In other respects it was a richer land than Babylonia, for it had great natural stores of timber, of stone, and of precious metals. Moreover, the climate was cooler and more invigorating, and the people were consequently more energetic and pushful. In many respects, therefore, it was an ideal land for a people given over to the arts of industry and peace. But though the Assyrians knew much about these, they were, at least in later days, more inclined to be industrious in the arts of war. They often preferred, like untamed Arab tribes, to go raiding; to plunder the wealth of other peoples, who had toiled to develop the resources of their own countries. The kings of Assyria swept the main caravan routes, especially

towards the west, and spoiled the cities which lay along them, and carried away the inhabitants into captivity (II. Kin. xv. 29; xviii. 11). They conquered other lands, not that they might develop them and build up an empire, but that they might have an extensive raiding ground.

Sometimes Assyria's neighbours in Babylonia, or in Media and Persia gave them trouble. Then all their warlike energies were needed at home, and the distant western lands had peace. It was at such a time that the kingdom of David and later that of Solomon were established. But when the home troubles were settled Assyria sallied forth once more, and there was panic and confusion among the little kingdoms (Is. x. 5-9).

But every bully has his day. Enemies which had grown strong behind the mountains which tower above Assyria and Babylonia came down upon him and destroyed him. "Thy shepherds slumber, O King of Assyria; thy worthies are at rest; thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them" (Nahum iii. 18). The prophetic vision, "Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her?" was amply fulfilled (Nah. iii. 7).

So the Assyrian empire, if such it can be called, passed into the hands of the Medes and Babylonians. For a time Babylonia was a semi-independent state under Chaldean kings (II. Chron. xxxvi. 17), but eventually it also was absorbed under Cyrus (II. Chron. xxxvi. 20-23), whose empire was the most extensive the world had ever known, extending from the Mediterranean on the west to India on the east, and from the Caspian on the north to the Indian Ocean on the south. It was controlled from Shushan, a city in the hilly country west of Babylonia, which had been the kingdom of the Elamites.

PART II.

SECTION 2.

The Land of Promise.

ABRAHAM'S HABITAT.

THE background to the story of Abram presents a marked contrast to that of "the morning stories." In these Abel alone is a keeper of flocks, the rest, like Cain, are tillers of the soil, and builders of cities; or, like Noah, skilled in the use of tools. Abram, however, stands forth in a setting of pastoral scenes, of bleating sheep and lowing cattle, of quiet solitudes and grassy pastures.

Unlike the tiller of the soil, Abram is not tied to one spot by the possession of fields and gardens. He has no abiding place, but is ever wandering, seeking fresh pastures. In short, he is a typical nomad. All his wealth is either moveable or can move itself—gold, silver, tents, sheep, oxen, he-asses, she-asses, camels (Gen. xii. 16; xiii. 2). There is no reckoning of his wealth.

The early haunts of Abram were either on the fringes of Babylonia, near to Ur, or five hundred and fifty miles further up the river in the vicinity of Haran, a city situated in the hilly pasture lands north of the Euphrates. Abram's decided preference for hilly country suggests the probability that Haran was his homeland. It is likely that his relatives, like Job's family, and like many of the Arabs in the same region to-day, lived in the city and pastured their flocks in the country around. But Abram seems to have preferred the freer life of the tent-dweller (Cp. Gen. xviii. 1).

Whether near Ur, or near Haran, he did not live where the proximity of rivers made it possible to irrigate and till the ground, but where the soil

was untilled and in its virgin state. Here during the short rainy season the ground became covered everywhere with a beautiful carpet of grasses and flowers, and formed a rich pasturage which extended in all directions as far as eye could see. When the dry season set in the ground became parched, and the grasses and flowers faded, and dried up into hay. It was a treeless land, for the rain did not suffice to support anything larger than herbs.

It was in such grassland or steppe surroundings that Abram always pitched his tent, whether near Haran, or in Canaan, or in Egypt. Usually he had his headquarters near some city where he could do trade with the produce of his flocks; but much of his time he spent in leading his flocks and herds from pastures just exhausted to others as yet untouched. This he did, no doubt in the same systematic way in which it is done to-day by the inhabitants of the same lands. In the wet season the pasturage is abundant and no difficulty presents itself. The horses and asses go first into the long grass; the oxen and camels follow; and last of all come the sheep and the goats, to crop and nibble what the others have left.

During the rainless season sweet dry grass covers the pastures, and food is abundant; but now the food is so dry that water becomes a prime necessity, and springs and water-holes must be foraged after; and, when found, the secret of their position must be carefully guarded.

Flocks and pastures are symbols of peace, and therefore it is easy to think of Abram as a mild and peaceful patriarch. But suddenly he appears in another rôle (Gen. xiv. 14-16; Cp. xxxii. 6). He hears that his nephew Lot has been taken captive, and so he leads forth his trained men born in his house. Why had this man of peace a band of trained

men? Where did he get them? Another glance at his daily life will answer these questions.

With a nomad community every day begins with the striking of camp, and every evening with the making of it again. Again, during the day, the great flocks and herds must be controlled; and, as they move from place to place, must be guarded against the sudden onslaughts of such raiding parties from other tribes as are described as stripping Job of so much of his wealth (Job i. 17). All this necessitates a military type of organisation. The tribe or clan was divided into groups of tens, hundreds, or even thousands, each with its own leader, who was captain and judge (Cp. Exodus xviii. 13-25). The strenuous life, with its perpetual wandering in hot and parched surroundings, where water was scarce and food was simple, gave to every man a training of the severest kind.

Thus it is possible to picture Abram as able to mobilise his shepherds rapidly into a first-class fighting force, and to swoop with lightning-like fury upon, and annihilate the forces that had captured his kinsman.

ACROSS CANAAN.

And the Lord said unto Abram, "Arise, walk through the land . . . in the breadth of it" (Gen. xiii. 17). Standing where Lot had left him he could look on to the plain of Jordan down in the valley, twelve miles away. Between was broken country falling, like a petrified cataract, in a succession of terraces and precipitous slopes, down and down for four thousand feet, into the most extraordinary valley on the earth, with its floor twelve hundred feet below the surface of the sea.

This broken slope was a barren stony desert,

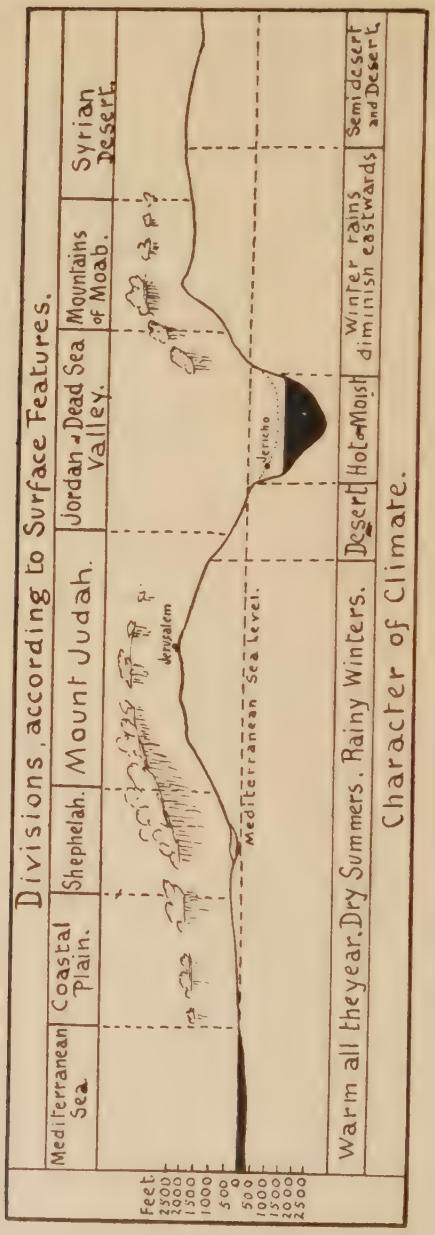

FIG. 7. DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PALESTINE FROM EAST TO WEST.

with here and there a scrubby bush, which survived because it sent its long roots into the heart of the rock, and drew thence its scanty supply of water. The brown barrenness of this "wilderness and solitary place" only emphasised the emerald verdure of the plain below, which was so well-watered that it could be likened only to such a "garden of the Lord" as Egypt (Gen. xiii. 10). But the plain ended abruptly upon the lifeless shores of a deep blue lake, the Dead Sea, whose waters were so salt that no fish or other creature could live in it.

Beyond the plain and the lake were the mountains of Moab, rising once more like titanic ramparts to the level of the spot where he stood. "In the morning those distant mountains were enveloped in the grey shadow of the rising sun, in the afternoon hidden by the rising vapours, in the evening bathed in the light of the setting sun, which gave an added glow to the already brightly coloured rocks."

Those far-off mountains were but the edge of the plateau of Arabia, which at first was covered with grassland, and passed eastwards into a stony and sandy waste, the Syrian desert. For six hundred miles it extended and dropped gradually in level to the gardens, pastures and marshes of Babylonia on its further margin.

Such then was Abram's eastward outlook. Turning southwards and westwards he gazed along and across a narrow tableland, the Mount of Judah. It was a stony moorland, with scant pasturage, rising here and there in craggy round-topped hills.

A walk of about fifteen miles westwards brought him to the western margin of the mount. On this side also it descended with moderately steep slopes, but these presented a marked contrast to the sun-scorched cliffs and barren terraces of the east, for they were covered with pastures and woodland.

These slopes stretched downwards till they merged in the Shephelah, a strip of country with broad open well-cultivated vales and rounded hills five to eight hundred feet high (I. Sam. xvii. 1-3).

Beyond was the low-lying undulating plain by the sea, called in the north the plain of Sharon, and in the south in later days the plain of the Philistines. This was bounded westwards by a golden fringe of sand hills, and then the sea.

From this western shore to the mountains of Moab was a distance of only about seventy miles, nevertheless, it would be difficult to find elsewhere so narrow a strip of country with such extremes of height and depth, and such contrasts of climate and vegetation.

In this traverse across the land two outstanding facts must be emphasised. The first is the deep hollow of the Jordan, or Dead Sea Valley. Suppose that Snowdon, which is 3,560 feet high, had been transported to the plain chosen by Lot, then Abram, from his view point, 3,000 feet above the Mediterranean Sea, would still be able to look down upon its summit, more than 700 feet below him. This hollow was an effectual protection to the land of Canaan, and prevented it from being easily overrun by hordes of wild nomad tribes from the Syrian desert.

The second outstanding fact is the existence of a steep flank on the west also. This, though not so formidable as that which faced towards Jordan, also served as an effective hindrance to those who would invade the tableland from the Shephelah, or the coastal plain.

Both flanks of Mount Judah were, however, gashed by gorges and valleys with steep craggy sides. In winter these hemmed in raging torrents. In summer they contained dry water-courses, or

wadies. Down one of these Lot, with his men, his flocks and his herds, wended his way after leaving Abram. At noon they rested in the shade of the rocks near some grassy spot where water oozed forth. With these rugged valleys are associated some of the most strirring episodes in favourite Old Testament stories (e.g., I. Sam xxiv.).

THE STORY OF THE JORDAN VALLEY.

The story of the valley wherein the plain of Jordan lies is quite different from that of most valleys. Those owe their existence to the action of rivers and streams which flow along them, and which by rolling stones along their beds continually wear them, and so cut the valley deeper and deeper. Meanwhile, rain and frost, rivulets and runnels, widen the valley. Such was not the mode of origin of the Dead Sea, or the Jordan valley. This owes its existence to the action of the great forces which lift the floors of seas to make land, and crumple up lands to make mountain ranges.

In by-gone ages long cracks and fissures broke the rocks in the region now occupied by this valley. A strip of country several hundred miles long sank gradually below the level of the land on either side, and formed what is called a rift valley. By the same process those precipitous and terraced slopes which rise to the heights of Judah and Moab were formed. All this took place very slowly, and was virtually completed long before the time of the Bible stories.

The valley thus formed is four hundred miles long. At its extreme northern end it passes between the Lebanons and the Anti-Lebanons. Here its floor is three thousand feet above the sea-level. From thence southwards its floor dips rapidly

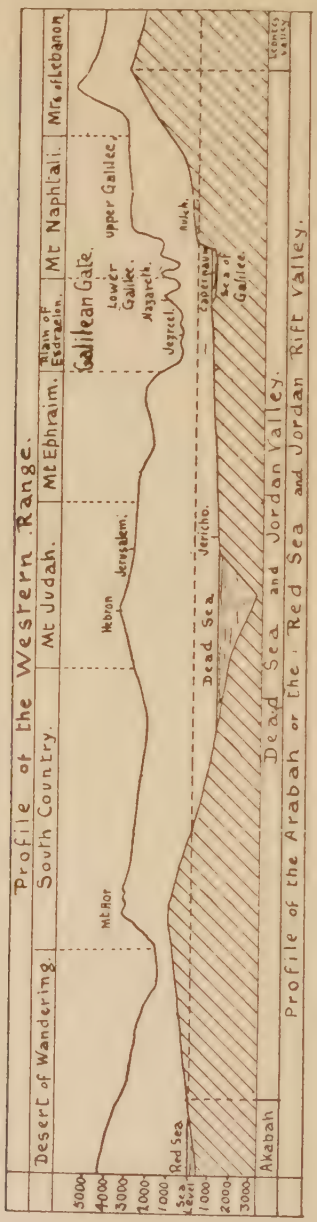

FIG. 8. DIAGRAM SHOWING THE SURFACE CONFIGURATION OF PALESTINE FROM NORTH TO SOUTH.

until in the region of Mount Judah it reaches its greatest depth below the sea-level. It is down this slope that the Jordan flows. Rising on the flanks of Mount Hermon, the southernmost peak of the Anti-Lebanons, it reaches sea-level in the marshes round Lake Huleh. A few miles further on it flows into the freshwater Sea of Galilee, some seven hundred feet lower down. From this point it flows as a tempestuous and turbid stream to the Dead Sea, which lies in the deepest part of the hollow. The valley floor now rises again above sea-level, and thus shuts off the Dead Sea effectively from connection with the open sea. The whole of this valley, from the source of the Jordan southwards, is called the Arabah (Josh. xviii. 18). Its southern end is submerged to form that arm of the Red Sea called the Akabah, at the head of which stood the seaport town of Elath (Deut. ii. 8; II. Kin. xiv. 22).

Fresh incidents in the making of this valley occur from time to time. Sometimes a slight new break takes place in the rocks, and a new fissure occurs. This is accompanied by an earthquake, which jars and shakes the whole country-side. Such earthquakes are familiar incidents in Bible stories. Thus when the Israelites stood at the foot of Mount Sinai "the whole mount quaked greatly" (Ex. xix. 18). On another occasion "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed Korah and his company" up, and the earth closed again upon them (Num. xvi. 30).

Prophets counted earthquakes among the instruments of the Almighty for delivering his people from their enemies (Is. xxix. 6), and it is not unlikely that the downfall of Jericho was due to a similar cause. The temporary damming of the waters of Jordan at Adam (Josh. iii. 16) has had its counterpart in the same locality, after earthquakes, in modern times.

The poets of Israel, as also Elijah at Horeb (I. Kin. xix. 11), witnessed earthquakes, but unlike him they saw God in them. "Thou hast made the land to tremble, and hast rent it; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh" (Ps. lx. 2). The "mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like young sheep" (Ps. cxiv. 4).

Along the margins of this valley hot springs and sulphur springs occur — vestiges of the volcanic outbursts which took place when the valley was first formed. Alongside the Dead Sea such springs are more common, and sulphur is strewn upon the plain. The limestone of the hills on either side exudes bitumen (Gen. xiv. 10), which in times of earthquake is squeezed out in greater quantity. Even to-day there are all the conditions necessary for such a conflagration as that in which Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed, the smoke of which could be seen by Abram at Hebron, rising like the smoke of a mighty furnace (Gen. xix. 28).

THE LAND OF THE PATRIARCHS.

Abram, Isaac, and Jacob were but sojourners in the land of Promise: that is to say, they were unlike the inhabitants of the land, who dwelt in fenced cities, cultivated the ground immediately around them, and pastured their flocks in the field or common ground beyond. On the contrary, they were dwellers in tents, encamping now here, now there, and wandering with their flocks about the country. The extent of their wanderings is shown by a list of their halting places. Shechem (Gen. xii. 6; xxxiii. 18), Bethel (Gen. xii. 8), Hebron (Gen. xiii. 18), Gerar, and between Kadesh Barnea and Shur (Gen. xx. 1), Beersheba (Gen. xxi. 31-33), the Land of the Philistines (Gen. xxi. 34), Beer-la-hai-roi (Gen. xxv. 11).

They encamped sometimes on a site close to a city, as for example by the Oak of Moreh, near to Shechem, and between Kadesh and Shur. At other times they encamped near sacred spots such as Bethel, or in valleys where water could be obtained from springs and wells.

Most of the cities mentioned in their sojournings were situated on important ancient caravan routes, and at suitable distances from one another, to serve as stopping-places and markets for caravans. One of the most important of these routes coming from the north passed close to Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba, Rehoboth, Beer-la-hai-roi, and thence by the way of Shur to Egypt. Another route started at Elath, on the Red Sea, passed near to Kadesh, coincided for a while with the other route, and then struck out for the Philistine coast. It was by the former of these two routes that we meet "Hagar, the Egyptian," fleeing from her mistress (Gen xvi. 7). It was by the same route that Abram, and at a later time Jacob, descended to Egypt.

The land of their sojournings extended, therefore, from Shechem to Kadesh, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. It included Mount Judah, and its natural continuation south and north. Throughout its length it was clearly defined on the east by the Arabah. A little south of Hebron the tableland broadens out and drops to a lower level. At the same time the stony rugged character of Judah gives place to the rolling country of the South, or the Negeb.

The Negeb rises to its greatest height in the rugged wild region towards the Arabah. From thence it has a general and gradual slope towards the low-lying coastal plain, which in later days became the Land of the Philistines. The numerous dry valleys or wadies which scored the slope opened

in the same direction. Thus the Negeb, unlike Judah, was easily accessible from the coast region.

Owing to the general lower level, the winds from off the sea yield a smaller rainfall than they do further north. Southwards the rainfall diminishes, for the winds come less from the sea and more from the land, and consequently the Negeb eventually merges into pure desert, the Desert of Paran (Num. x. 12), and Shur, where, in later days, the Israelites wandered. Here and there springs of water come forth in the wadies and give rise to oases. It was at such a spot that Kadesh was situated.

From Hebron to Kadesh, a distance of eighty miles, was the land where Abram and Isaac pastured their flocks, herds, and camels. In winter the pasturage was fresh and ample, but in summer it was dry and parched. Except during actual rainfall, there was no running water, and springs were few (Josh. xv. 19), and wells had to be dug. Here Abram and Isaac dug wells in the valley, and contended with the inhabitants for their possession (Gen. xxvi. 19-21). Here along the fertile valley flats Isaac made a venture as a tiller of the soil, and was extraordinarily successful (Gen. xxvi. 12).

When Jacob returned from exile in Haran, his wealth was said to be so great that he could afford to send Esau a present of five hundred beasts (Gen. xxxii. 14, 15). To have joined with his father in Negeb might have led to the crowding of pastures, and to discords between the herdsmen. This may have been one reason why Jacob settled at first near Shechem, and later near Bethel. This block of country is the natural continuation northwards of Mount Judah, and is called Mount Ephraim. Unlike Judah, it has lost the tableland character, and consists of upland valleys and isolated mountains. Along half its length there runs a spacious valley,

the Plain of Mukneh, seven miles long and two miles wide. On all sides this is enclosed in mountains, except where other valleys, the broad outgoings of Ephraim (Josh. xvii. 18), lead from it down to the plain of Sharon. The plain of Mukneh to-day has many cornfields, and is also one of the favourite pasture grounds of the whole region. Along this valley Jacob must sometimes have wandered with his flocks and herds.

At its northern end the plain forks into two

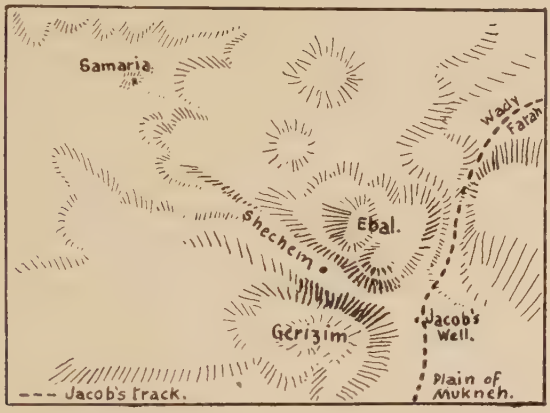

FIG. 9. MAP OF SHECHEM AND SAMARIA.

valleys. One, called to-day the Wady Farah, leads by easy stages to the Jordan valley. It was up this that Jacob brought his flocks after he parted from his brother Esau. The other, the Vale of Shechem, is one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in the Promised Land, for it is well watered by abundant springs. It is very narrow and gorge-like, with Mount Ebal on the north, and Gerizim (Josh. viii. 33) on the south.

Just where the plain narrows to enter the gorge is the spot where grew the Oak of Moreh. Here Jacob pitched his tent and dug a well.

The city of Shechem itself was in the vale (Jud. ix. 7), and controlled this important gateway from the plain of Mukneh to the equally favourite pastures of Dothan and Sharon.

Bethel, the next stage in Jacob's journeyings (Gen. xxxv. 1-8), presented a great contrast to Shechem. It was situated high up, on the watershed near the boundary between Mount Judah and Mount Ephraim. Though it was a place of bare rocks and scanty pastures, it was rich in sacred memories.

At Isaac's death, Jacob moved to the patriarchal headquarters at Hebron, and though his flocks sometimes fed on the pastures of the north (Gen. xxxvii. 13), he remained settled in the south.

PART II.

SECTION 3.

The Conquest of the Land.

JOSHUA'S STRATEGY.

AFTER four centuries of peaceful though arduous life in Egypt, the Israelites had become unfitted for war. To have gone up to the land of Canaan by the way of the Philistines would have meant encountering, in less than a month, a people skilled in warfare. They were, therefore, led forth by the way of Shur, into the wilderness of Paran. Forty years of life in semi-desert turned this undisciplined horde into a band of trained fighting men, and made of them such warriors as Abram had in his household.

Thus prepared, they arrived at the point where the Mountains of Moab overlook Jericho. Across the valley lay the Promised Land. Abram had come there with only a small tribe, and there was plenty of room for him to sojourn in the land. But Israel came as a fighting force intending to possess the land, to capture its cities, and to till its soil and occupy its pastures.

Jericho occupied a key position. To the south lay the Dead Sea, shutting off all access to Mount Judah, south of Jericho. To the north, for many miles, the land rises by precipices and steep slopes to the tableland above. Over against Jericho this wall of precipices was broken through by several valleys, notably the valley of Achor (Josh. vii. 24, 26), which thus provided easy access to the ten miles of tableland between Bethel and Jerusalem. The same region could be similarly approached from the coastal plain on the west by several valleys, one of which was the valley of Ajalon (Josh. x. 12), leading

FIG. 10. MAP OF THE PASSES OF BENJAMIN.

up to the pass of Bethoron. This ten-mile stretch of tableland was a strategic position, the holding of which gave the possessor control not only of the north and south road from Shechem to Hebron, but of the cross-roads from the coast to the plain of Jordan. In later days much of this stretch became the lot of Benjamin, and these passes may therefore be conveniently called the Passes of Benjamin.

Jericho thus guarded the entry to these passes on the east. Joshua, therefore, captured and destroyed it at the outset, and established a base for future operations close by, at Gilgal (Josh. v. 10).

The capture of the passes themselves, however, was no easy matter, for they were guarded by a cluster of fenced cities on the tableland.

The first of these to be attacked by Joshua was Ai (Josh. vii. 2). Climbing up to it by the same track down which Lot had led his flock and herds half a millenium before, Joshua took his army gradually up the side of the valley, and thus mounted the terrace upon which the city stood, and approached it from the north (Josh. viii. 11). Whilst the main body was doing this, another body crept along the floor of the valley to the wady which lay west of Ai (Josh. viii. 13). Hidden thus, they lay in ambush close to the city, and thus all the plans were laid which led to its capture.

Not far away was Gibeon (Josh. ix. 3), another of the guardian cities. Scared by the fate of Jericho and Ai, they played a trick on Joshua, whereby they saved their lives but yielded their stronghold, which was one of the strongest which guarded the passes.

And now all the other cities became alarmed. The King of Jerusalem gathered together (Josh. x. 3) the kings and governors of the Negeb, Mount Judah, and the Philistine plain, and came up against Gibeon. But Joshua, who had returned to his base

at Gilgal (Josh. x. 9), made a remarkable forced march during the night, fell suddenly upon the assembled armies, and drove them helter-skelter down the gorge-like pass overlooked by Beth-horon (10-11), and the broad valley of Ajalon to the plain.

By a similar battle with the assembled armies of the kings of the north, he broke the combined opposition of the Canaanites. He then allotted portions of the land to each of the clans under him for them to subjugate thoroughly. Those that were successful became more or less united into three groups, determined by geographical circumstances.

The Judah group occupied Negeb and Mount Judah; and for a long time was separated from the Ephraim group, in Mount Ephraim, by the uncaptured cities of the passes. The Naphtali group occupied the hill country of Mount Naphtali, north of Esdraelon. They were kept separate from Ephraim because of the inability of the Israelites to resist the onslaught of the Canaanite chariots of iron in the plain. The Reuben group, which makes a fourth, was already established east of Jordan.

THE PHILISTINE BORDERS.

The Canaanites were a people closely allied to the Israelites in race and language. Whilst Joshua was smiting them on the east, a new peril threatened them on the west, an invasion of Philistines. They belonged to a quite different race, highly skilled in the arts of peace and war. Driven from their own homes beyond the seas, they swooped down in ships upon the coast of Canaan, and captured the plain, which has ever since been called the Plain of the Philistines. The name Philistine, modified to Palestine, has become the modern name for the land of Canaan.

Thus a three-cornered conflict of peoples went on in the land, for the Israelites soon came to close quarters with the Philistines also.

Encounters between these two took place frequently round the passes of Benjamin, and in the border country between Mount Judah and the Philistine plain.

Down from the passes and across this borderland run three valleys: Ajalon on the north, Elah on the south, and Sorek in between. Each started among the uplands, in numerous gullies and wadies, with boulder-strewn floors and rocky sides. These united and opened out into the wide vales among the hills of the Shephelah, which were floored with a rich red soil, continuous with that of the broad cornfields of the plain.

Perched on the end of one of the spurs which run out from the tableland, alongside the valley of Sorek, was the village of Zorah (Jud. xiii. 2, 24, 25), Samson's home. Here he stood and gazed across the valley to the village of Timnah (Jud. xiv. 1), down on the other side. There was the vineyard where he slew the lion (Jud. xiv. 5); there also lived his bride. From this place on another occasion he watched the fire started by his "foxes" (jackals) in the cornfields, and saw it sweep like a crimson wall across the plain, converting unharvested grain into blackened waste.

In later days (I. Sam. vi. 9, 16) the Lords of the Philistines, standing among those same cornfields, watched with anxious minds to see which way the two oxen would go with the waggon containing the ark. Slowly the oxen sauntered along the valley and came to a standstill by the cornfields of Bethshemesh. Sometime afterwards the ark was carried up the valley beyond the cornfields to the upland village of Kirjath Jearim (vii. 1). To-day the scenery

is the same, but a new feature presents itself, for through the same valley along which the ark was drawn there now runs a railway, which continues past Kirjath Jearim through the wadies to Jerusalem. Possibly David followed this route when he brought the ark up to the royal city (II. Chron. i. 4).

The third valley, the valley of Elah, is associated with another border story. The scene was enacted (I Sam. xvii. 2) just where two valleys from the Judæan upland unite in a broad vale, which passing westwards narrowed considerably. The Philistines were set in battle array on the southern side of the vale. The Israelites occupied an equally strong position on the north. Neither force was willing to forego the security of its position for the uncertainty of defeating the other. The Philistines hoped to tempt the Israelites to come out first, and they used Goliath as a decoy.

FIG. 11. MAP OF THE SCENE OF DAVID'S FIGHT WITH GOLIATH.

ISRAEL'S BATTLEGROUND.

The plain of Esdraelon (Fig. 18, p. 117) was an important battleground of Old Testament times. It is triangular in outline, with the apex pointing south. On the west is the Carmel spur separating it from the plain of Sharon. On the east is the Gilboa spur separating it from the Jordan valley. On the north is Mount Naphtali, or the hill-country of Galilee.

At the south corner, close to where the vale of Dothan opens to the plain, the brook Kishon has its source. Thence it flows across the plain, receiving tributaries from the hills around. It escapes by a narrow valley at the western corner, and flows along the foot of Carmel to the sea. At the eastern corner is situated Mount Tabor, and between it and Gilboa are the hill of Moreh, and the vale of Jezreel, which descends rapidly to the Jordan valley. The stronghold of Bethshan guarded the lower end of this vale; the city of Jezreel stood at its head, and commanded an extensive view, both towards Bethshan (I. Kin. iv. 12), and across the plain of Esdraelon to Megiddo. This city guarded the pass of the same name, which, like the vale of Dothan, gave access across Carmel to Sharon.

It was upon Mount Tabor that Deborah, the Hebrew Joan of Arc, united the army she had gathered from Mount Ephraim, with the army Barak had gathered from Naphtali (Jud. iv. 5, 6). Sixteen miles away the hosts of the Canaanites were assembling in the gap through which Kishon escapes to the sea. Sisera was their leader, and they were strong in the possession of nine hundred chariots of iron. After following the edge of the plain as far as Megiddo, they struck across the plain towards Tabor by the main road north from Egypt. Trusting in Jehovah, whose abode was Horeb, whose wings were the wind, whose weapon was the storm, the footmen of Israel ventured forth on to the plain. A deluge of rain fell, the streams swelled to torrents, and Kishon to a flood. The plain became such a morass that the heavy chariots stuck in the mud. Unable to use them, the Canaanites were helpless, and fled in all directions (Jud. v. 18-22). Thus the light-footed hillsmen were for once triumphant in the plain, and henceforth Naphtali and Ephraim were united.

The link, which was thus forged between them, was always a source of weakness. For a while they tilled its fields, and harvested its crops, and then trouble came up from the east (Jud. vi. 3-5). The Midianites came from their own scorched lands beyond Jordan, up the vale of Jezreel. They came, not as in Joseph's day as peaceful merchantmen, but as marauding hordes. Weakened by continued strife with the Canaanites, the Hebrews were unable to drive the marauders away, and year after year they saw their harvests stolen. A few succeeded in harvesting their own crops in the more sheltered valleys among the hills. Gideon was one of them. Seized by a furious zeal for Jehovah, he called Israel together and assembled his hosts on the heights of Gilboa. Across the valley, on the slopes of Moreh, the Midianites had pitched their tents. Between was a stream whose waters (Jud. vii. 1) issued from a cave at the foot of Gilboa, and as they flowed served as a moat, protecting Gideon's position. Alongside the stream a jungle of rushes and shrubs provided ample cover for ambushed foemen. The men whom Gideon winnowed out for his daring enterprise were those who proved themselves to be wary, by keeping their eyes upon the bushes opposite whilst they drank hastily the waters of the stream.

FIG. 12. MAP OF THE SCENE OF GIDEON'S EXPLOIT AND OF SAUL'S LAST BATTLE.

In the days of Saul, the Philistines had extended their sway northwards over Sharon, and across the plain of Esdraelon, and down the vale of Jezreel to the Jordan valley. Saul endeavoured to stop their extending power in one great battle (I. Sam. xxviii. 4, 5; xxxi. 1-10). Like Gideon, he assembled his army on the flanks of Gilboa. The Philistines encamped on the same spot as did the Midianites before them, but unlike the desert hordes they had chariots. Avoiding the stream which protected Saul's position, they charged up the western slopes of Gilboa. The ranks of the Israelites were broken, and Saul and Jonathan were slain. Saul's life thus seemed to end in failure, yet he had accomplished a great work. He had taken a people who hid in caves and thickets and pits when the Philistines appeared (I. Sam. xiii. 6), and had welded them into an army that was not afraid to meet the Philistines face to face, and under Saul's successor was able to defeat them utterly.

DAVID'S KINGDOM ESTABLISHED.

The misfortunes which came upon Saul in his later efforts to free the Israelites from the domination of the Philistines did not harass his successor David; on the contrary, we read "the Lord gave victory to David whithersoever he went" (II. Sam. viii. 6).

David began his reign as a minor king over the region south of and around Hebron (II. Sam. ii. 11). Eventually he reigned over all Israel. Hebron then lay too far south to serve as the capital of his enlarged kingdom. He therefore cast about to find a more suitable city, and pitched upon Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was one of the strongholds on the passes of Benjamin, and such was the natural strength of its position that it remained unsubdued,

and occupied by the Jebusites, up to the commencement of David's reign. In capturing it (II. Sam. v. 6-9) David removed the last obstacle to free and unhindered intercourse between the Israelites of Mounts Judah and Ephraim.

FIG. 13. THE HEBREW KINGDOMS IN RELATION TO THE MAIN TRADE ROUTES.

David smote the Philistines even into their own land, and took away from them some of their cities (II. Sam. viii. 1). By this act he gained control of the plain of Sharon, with the accompanying seaboard and the port of Joppa. At the same time he also freed the fertile plains of Esdraelon and of the Jordan valley from the incursions of these foes. Thus for the first time all Israel became united, not only in spirit but in territory.

Now that they were free from the attacks of their old enemies, the Israelites, under David, extended their sway over the small nations which surrounded them, so that their kingdom and sphere of control eventually reached from the Euphrates on the north (II. Sam. viii. 3) to Elath, on the Red Sea,

on the south (II. Sam. viii. 14), and from the Mediterranean shore on the west to the Arabian desert on the east.

This extension of their sway was not done for the mere joy of conquest, but for material gain, for the control of the main caravan and trade routes of that ancient world. There was not a trade route between the civilisations of Mesopotamia and the north, and Egypt, but what passed for a portion of its course through David's kingdom. The produce of India, of Africa, and of Central Arabia, came to Elath, and was carried thence, through the south of his kingdom, to either Egypt or Philistia.

David's conquests opened up an era of peace to his subjects, and of safe conduct to all traders and merchants. In return for this privilege payment was made, usually in kind.

These commercial benefits became most evident during Solomon's reign. Solomon, with a mind more free from the anxieties of war (I. Kin. iv. 25), was able to develop still further the trade and commerce of his kingdom. He planted fortresses along the main trade routes (I. Kin. ix. 15-18). He established navies (I. Kin. x. 11, 22), which came from across the seas bringing gold and silver, valuable woods, and precious stones, ivory, apes and peacocks. So prosperous was he that the old chronicler tells us that silver became as common in Jerusalem as stone (I. Kin. x. 27).

Though Solomon's magnificence was so great that it has become an emblem for worldly prosperity down through the ages, he gained it at the expense of his people. Like an ordinary eastern despot, he was more concerned for his own glory than for the happiness of his people and the stability of his kingdom. He used the Israelites for soldiers and administrative servants (I. Kin. ix. 22). When he

was building his palace and temple he took them away in batches of many thousands, and compelled them to carry burdens, to hew wood and to quarry stone. He even enslaved the stranger that was within his gates (I. Kin. ix. 21).

It is not surprising that, even whilst he was still alive, the more distant portions of his sphere of control broke free from his tyranny (I. Kin. xi. 11, 14, 24); and that at his death his kingdom fell asunder.

The Israelites were not an industrial manufacturing people, they imported all manufactured goods from their neighbours, the Phœnicians and Egyptians. On the other hand, they were the producers of raw material, such as wool, corn, fruit, oil. At the time coins were not the medium of exchange. Taxes and tolls were paid in kind, and Solomon's household contained twelve officials, whose duty it was to collect the goods monthly (I. Kin. iv. 27, 28).

PART II.

SECTION 4.

Daily Life in the New Country.

SUMMER AND WINTER.

UNLIKE Babylonia and Egypt, the Land of Canaan was dependent for its water, not on great rivers, but on rain. "The land whither ye go to possess it . . . drinketh water of the rain of heaven" (Deut. xi. 11). "He watereth the mountains from his chambers," "The trees of the Lord are satisfied" (Ps. civ. 13, 16. In England rain falls at any time of the year, and some of the heaviest downpours come in summer, but in Palestine all the rain comes in the winter, and summer is a season of unbroken sunshine. The wet season begins in October, with the first or "former rains"; the fall becomes heavy in January, and finishes as the last, or "latter rains," in March.

As with the British Isles, the rain is brought by westerly gales. Each lasts two or three days, and is followed by several days of warm sunshine. Winter is not a season of leafless trees and cessation of growth, but a season of abundant foliage, of growing crops, and a season when nature begins to put on her most beauteous garb.

As with our own islands, the clouds do not distribute their favours uniformly over the land; the amount of rain which falls is determined largely by the shape of the surface of the ground (Fig. 7, p. 52). As the moisture-laden winds come from off the Mediterranean Sea they blow up the western slopes, rising at first gradually over the coastal plain and Shephelah, and then rapidly up the flanks of Mount Judah, and the other portions of the western range. The air, as it rises, cools, and distils its moisture in

clouds and rain. Here, then, the quantity which falls suffices to support such trees as oak, poplar, and pine, as well as the carpet of grass and herbaceous plants. The trees, however, are not abundant enough to form forests, but are clustered here and there in copses and open woodland.

FIG. 14. THE CIRCLE OF THE SEASONS, IN PALESTINE.

The tableland itself, though there is as great an average rainfall at Jerusalem as at London, viz., twenty-six inches, is too lofty and its soil too shallow for trees to grow, except in sheltered hollows.

On the east the slope is reversed, and with it all the processes described above are reversed also: the air descends to the Jordan hollow and, as it de-

scends, becomes compressed and warmer, and tends to absorb, rather than to distil, moisture. This slope, though narrow, is consequently almost rainless; even the clouds dissolve as they pass over it, and the sun scorches its surface so that it is as bare of vegetation as a desert. It is a scrub desert, for it abounds in scrubby bushes, with long stout roots, which suck water from the rock at great depths. This is the wilderness which so often comes into view in Bible stories (Matt. iv. 1; Wilderness of Maon, I. Sam. xxiii. 24, 25; Engedi, I. Sam. xxiv. 1; Bethaven, Josh. xviii. 12; Tekoa, II. Chron. xx. 20).

The plain of Jordan is well watered, not so much by the river Jordan itself, as by the springs of water which issue forth from the bases of the mountains on either side. The Jordan itself runs in a smaller valley of its own, one mile wide, and one hundred and fifty feet below the level of the plain. The floor of this valley is covered with jungle growth, where wild beasts abound.

The heat in the Jordan and Dead Sea valley is so intense that tropical vegetation such as palm trees (Deut. xxxiv. 3), and other heat-loving plants, e.g., vines and pomegranates, grow freely. The air is laden with moisture, which is constantly evaporating from the marshy jungle and the Dead Sea.

Beyond the plain the air rises up the slopes of the mountains of Moab, and deposits its moisture in sufficient quantities to support woodlands in the valley hollows.

Passing eastwards the winds become still more depleted of their moisture, and yield an ever-decreasing quantity of rain. For some miles this suffices for the needs of shrubs, grasses and flowers, and the country becomes an open grassland, or steppe. Eventually the rainfall becomes too limited for the requirements even of such a surface coating of vege-

tation. The Syrian desert now sets in, and stretching away for hundreds of miles, separates Babylonia from Palestine, as effectually as an ocean.

ROCKS AND SPRINGS.

During the wet season the question of water-supply is not a pressing one. The streams are full to overflowing, the gorges and wadies leading down from the uplands resound to the thunder of raging torrents.

When the dry season sets in these streams and torrents disappear, and it is only in the lowlands that a few streams and rivers remain. Up among the hills the question of water-supply becomes more and more pressing, as well for the needs of flocks and herds as for crops and people.

To understand how the supply is obtained it is necessary to have some knowledge of the rocks out of which the land is built. The coastal plain consists mainly of sand and gravel, for not many ages ago it formed part of the sea-floor. A gradual upward movement of the earth's crust lifted the sea-floor, and it became the plain. Over considerable areas of this a coating of rich fertile soil, washed down by winter torrents from the hills, has since been spread by the floods.

The region of the Shephelah consists mainly of soft yellow sandstone. The rest of the land is formed of soft grey chalky limestone, with sheets of harder limestone and occasionally of clay. The soft limestone is porous, and absorbs water as does a sponge. Whilst, therefore, much of the winter rain flows off immediately into stream and torrent channels, much sinks into the rock, and is stored in its pores and cracks, thus producing an inexhaustible reservoir which underlies even the desert.

Up to a certain level the rock is saturated with water. This level is called the water table, and lies close to the surface in valley and lowland, and far below it in the highest hills. In lowlands and valleys, therefore, though no stream may be near, it is possible, by digging wells, to obtain an unfailing supply of water. In those lands well-diggers, like Abram, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. xxvi. 19-26), were public benefactors.

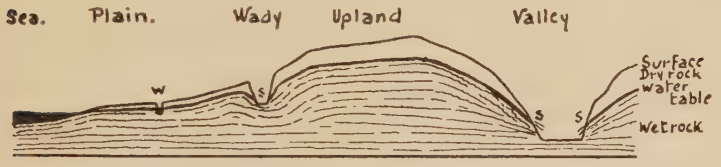

FIG. 15. THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNDERGROUND WATER IN PALESTINE.

The water table lay considerably below the surface in Mount Judah, but the valleys, gorges, and wadies here and there descended to sufficiently great depth to penetrate it. Under such conditions the water issues forth as a spring, which occasionally is copious enough to produce a perennial stream. The Jordan valley was so deep that considerable springs came forth in it; hence, the plain of Jordan was proverbially well-watered (Gen. xiii. 10).

Where the spring was little more than a trickle, a cistern was hewn out of the rock to catch the water. Each village had its cistern. Every evening and morning girls and women came, bearing pitchers on their heads, to draw water. Here also shepherds brought their flocks, and boys splashed and bathed. At the bottom of the cistern was a hole through which the water could be withdrawn and conducted by channels to water the village gardens.

For towns larger water schemes were carried out, the water of springs, and also rain-water, being

conserved in small reservoirs. These were the pools so frequently referred to, such as the Pool of Samaria, where they washed the chariot of King Ahab (I. Kin. xxii. 38). To make a pool was to confer a great boon on a community. "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written," etc. (II. Kin. xx. 20).

In addition to such natural sources of supply, it was usual to dig a pit or cistern out of the solid rock close to every house (II. Kin. xviii. 31) on the tableland. In this rain-water was collected during the winter, and used with economy during the summer.

In all limestone countries the underground water flows along the cracks and joints, and dissolves for itself considerable underground channels. These may become so enlarged that underground caverns may be formed, with rivers flowing through them. The river issuing forth at the foot of Gilboa (Jud. vii. 1), likewise another close to Jericho, come from such caverns.

Caves formed in this way honeycomb the limestone hills of Palestine, and were put to various uses as sheepfolds, strongholds, hiding places (I. Sam. xxiv. 3), and burial grounds (Gen. xxiii. 19).

JOTHAM'S PARABLE.

Jotham, standing on the top of Mount Gerizim, gathered all the material for his parable (Jud. ix. 8-15) from the view which lay at his feet (Fig. 9). There, in the pleasant vale of Shechem, he saw the shady olive groves. On the lower slopes of Ebal and Gerizim were vineyards, dotted with fig-trees. Such a scene would meet his eyes, no matter what the valley or city it was that he overlooked, for the

Israelites had become the keepers of vineyards and olive groves.

The vine flourished best on a slope, for this made it easy to keep the vineyard well-watered from a spring. If the slope were steep, walls were built along it, and soil was carried to fill up the space between the wall and the slope. Thus the hillside became covered with terraces, with the vines rooted in deep well-watered soil. On the level ground each vineyard was surrounded by a high wall, to protect it from foxes (Song of Songs ii. 15), jackals, bears, and also two-legged thieves. Between two adjoining vineyards there was therefore a narrow path, hemmed in by high walls. It was such a pathway that is indicated in the story of Balaam (Num. xxii. 24).

When the vineyard was some distance from the village, a two-storied tower was built in it. In the upper storey the family lived and slept during the grape harvest. This was in the months of September and October. Large quantities of grapes were then eaten fresh. Others were spread out in the sun to dry, and sprinkled with oil to keep the skins moist. The raisins thus made were stored in bins for food during the rest of the year. Some of the grapes again were trodden out in the wine-press, and their juice used for making wine, some of which turned sour and is called in scripture vinegar (Num vi. 3).

Fig trees were generally grown in vineyards, hence the frequency with which the two are mentioned together. "A land of wheat and barley, of vines and figtrees" (Deut. viii. 8). The "first ripe figs" come in early summer; some figs remain until late autumn, but the main fig harvest is in August and September. Figs both fresh and dried are an important food.

But the most valuable crop of the year is yielded

by the olive tree. This grows in groves. Each grove is the property of the adjoining village, and each tree belongs to a peasant. The fruit ripens in October, and is green and plum-shaped. The best oil comes from the fruit that is so ripe that it falls off the tree. Generally, however, it is beaten from the trees with long sticks (Deut. xxiv. 20). Some are pickled in salt and water, and are eaten more especially by the poor. Much is crushed into a paste, and squeezed in baskets of tough grass to obtain the oil.

Olive oil has many uses. The widow of Zarephath used it with meal to make a cake for Elijah (I. Kin. xvii. 12). The "good Samaritan" used it for dressing wounds, the virgins for trimming lamps. The psalmist was pleased to be anointed with oil, provided it was fresh (Ps. xcii. 10), not rancid. Spendthrift young men were liable to spend too much on oil for personal adornment. "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Prov. xxi. 17). "There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but the foolish man swalloweth it up" (ver. 20).

The olive tree flourished better in Palestine than in most lands, and thus the oil became an important asset to the Israelites. Solomon paid Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty thousand baths of oil as part payment for the wood brought from Lebanon for the building of the Temple (II. Chron. ii. 10).

THE FIELD OF BOAZ.

So Ruth "gleaned in the field until even" (Ruth ii. 17, 18), and then "went into the city," the city of Bethlehem, close by the road from Hebron to Shechem. Often, in days gone by, must Abram have sojourned with his flocks in the open country east

of Bethlehem, and gazed up at the walls of the city on the hill, and watched the Canaanites come forth from its gates to tend their vineyards on the slope, or till their cornfields at its foot. And now Ruth was gleaning in one of those selfsame fields belonging to Boaz, an Israelite, whose home was up there in the city. The Israelites had long ago driven the Canaanites out of Bethlehem, as they had done from many another city, and now they were no longer sojourners as were their fathers; they had become inhabitants.

They still kept flocks, as did their ancestors. Was it not Ruth's own grandson who spoke to Samuel in this very city, and said, "there remaineth the youngest (David), and behold he keepeth the sheep" (I. Sam. xvi. 11). Here in this open country, called the field, David slung stones to frighten wandering sheep back to the flock; here also he delivered one of his lambs from the jaws of a lion, and slew a bear.

But now, in addition to keeping flocks, the Israelites tilled the soil, and grew corn and barley. From the time of Joshua onwards the ploughman and the reaper play as important parts in the Bible stories as the shepherd and the herdsman. The oxen, drawing the ark, come to a standstill in the harvest-field of Bethshemesh (I. Sam. vi. 13). When the angel visits Gideon he is threshing corn on the floor of a winepress. When Elijah calls Elisha he finds him ploughing (I. Kin. xix. 19).

From the time of Joshua onwards tents are replaced by houses, and the camp by the city. Samuel has a house in Ramah, the Shunammite builds a room for Elisha, Jezebel talks to Jehu from a window, Naaman comes to see Elisha in his house in the city of Samaria. So innumerable other examples may be cited to illustrate the great change that had

come over the habits of the Israelites after they had conquered Canaan. Nor must it be overlooked that they owed much of the new knowledge they had gained to the Canaanites whom they dispossessed.

During the summer the heat of the sun baked the soil very hard; but when, in October, the summer drought broke up in rolling thunderstorms and drenching rains, which softened the soil, then Boaz and his men overhauled their primitive ploughs, and broke up the ground for the seed which had already been scattered to sink. The rains and warm days of winter soon caused the seed to sprout, and the ears to fill. With April the rains ceased, the sun ripened the crops, and in May harvest began. The men either plucked up the corn by the roots, or cut it in handfuls with a sickle, and set it up in sheaves. When it was dry it was cast in a heap upon the threshing floor, which was a level surface of rock or soil, usually in some exposed or windy position.

Threshing followed at once. Now as then a yoke of oxen, sometimes alone, sometimes drawing a slab armed with sharp flints (Is. xli. 15), is driven slowly round and round on the heap for ten or fifteen minutes; then the reverse way. From time to time the heap is turned over, and the grain and finely broken straw worked down to the bottom. After a day, or a day and a half, the whole heap is thus reduced to chaff and grain.

Now the winnowing begins. First the stubbly roots and coarser stalks are removed and are used for fuel. The finely broken material is tossed into the air with a wooden fork with broad flat prongs. The breeze, which daily throughout the summer comes up from off the sea, drives the chaff away a few yards, but the heavy grain falls back on the floor.

The chaff is collected and used for fodder. The corn is taken home and stored in bins.

SCENERY AND RELIGION.

For the Israelites the change from the ascetic life of the wilderness to the luxury of settled life in the Promised Land, where they could get "honey out of the rock," and have "butter of kine," "fat of lambs," "milk of sheep," and "blood of grapes," was fraught with great spiritual peril. This was recognised by their great leaders, Moses (Deut. xxxii. 8-17; vi. 14), and Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 15-18), who did not fail to give them ample warning.

In the Land of Promise, monotony and uniformity were unknown. Standing in the semi-tropical luxuriance of the Jordan valley, the wanderer from the desert could see the salt-strewn shores of the Dead Sea and the snow-clad slopes of Mount Hermon. In a few hours (Josh. x. 9), a man starting from the banks of the Jordan, with their jungles and wild beasts, could walk past the palm groves of Jericho, through the blistering heat of the desert of Judah (Bethaven, Josh. xviii. 12), and encounter a snow-storm at Bethlehem, Bethel, or Jerusalem. In many valleys springs broke forth with copious flow (Ps. civ. 10), and plains were clothed with fields of waving corn (Ps. lxv. 13). The hillsides laughed with vineyards and olive groves. Rain and sunshine chased one another across the landscape. Every nerve and every sense tingled with new sensations. To the inhabitants of the land each sensation was the gift of some spirit who claimed their worship and homage. For them each locality had its own little god (e.g., II. Kin. i. 3, 6, 16), or Baal, and his female counterpart, Asherah (I. Kin. xviii. 19), who caused its soil to be fertile, or its springs to gush forth. These they worshipped, each in its own district, at the High place, a level platform, usually on a hill,

with an altar and other equipment for sacrifice and worship.

As the Israelites became more settled in the land, and more friendly with its inhabitants, they learned from them the arts of agriculture; and were in constant danger also of adopting their religious beliefs or practices.

But nowhere is this soul-distracting land far from the wilderness and its helpful influences. David kept his flocks (I. Sam. xvii. 28), and Amos his herds (Amos i. 1), on the margin of the desert or wilderness of Judæa, which overlooks the plain of Jericho and the Dead Sea. To David every cave and every gully was familiar from his youth up; as Saul discovered to his cost I. Sam. xxvi.). Here also the Master spent forty days and forty nights alone with the wild goats, jackals, and hyænas (Mark i. 13). Elijah, a true son of the desert, went further afield, to Horeb, to renew his faith in Jehovah. Paul also communed with his own spirit for three years in Arabia (Gal. i. 17).

Gradually the lofty conception of God revealed under desert and semi-desert conditions gained the upper hand, and Israel came to realise that the multiplicity of blessings they enjoyed in their adopted land came from Him alone.

But in those later more enlightened days, when Jehovah alone was worshipped in the land, the struggle for purity of religion assumed another form. The fertility of the soil, and the proximity of the caravan routes, brought great prosperity and opportunities for luxury and self-indulgence such as were quite unknown in the wilderness; and consequently the conflict with the worship of Baal was replaced by a yet more severe conflict with the worship of self.

PART II.

SECTION 5.

The Nations on the Syrian Bridge.

THE LAND OF CEDARS.

SYRIA, like a land bridge, spanned the desert, and connected the peoples of the Euphrates valley with those of the Nile valley. This bridge was a strip of country four hundred miles long; and at the most only seventy miles wide, with the desert on the east and the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) on the west.

Its surface was just as diverse as that of Egypt and Babylonia was simple. They had only one or two rivers, with flat land on either side running through them from end to end, and consequently they were more easily subjected to the control of one king. But the surface of Syria had no such simplicity of features; on the contrary it was cut up into isolated portions by mountains difficult to cross, and gorges which could not be spanned. Except when Egypt, Babylonia or Assyria extended its sway along the bridge, it was occupied by a number of little kingdoms, of which Phœnicia was one.

When Solomon decided to build the Temple (I. Kin. v. 1-12; II. Chron. ii.) he found, as did his father David, that neither the plain of Sharon, nor the slopes of Carmel, nor any other place in his extensive dominions, yielded trees large enough to supply the beams required for supporting the roof. He thereupon sent an order to Hiram, king of Tyre, for timber from the cedars and firs of Lebanon.

Now Tyre was the chief of a number of cities perched on a narrow strip of land called Phœnicia between the mountains of Lebanon and the sea. These mountains extend for a distance of two hun-

dred miles parallel to the coast, and rear themselves up almost directly from the shore, to reach a height in their highest peaks of ten thousand feet. The rain-bearing winds from off the sea poured out their watery burden upon the seaward slopes copiously enough to supply the needs of great trees, "trees of the Lord." On the lower slopes olive groves abounded. From thence up to four thousand feet, walnut, oak, and other trees familiar to our own eyes predominated. Above four thousand feet forests of cedars and firs covered the mountains. It was from these that Hiram obtained timber, both for Solomon and for the building of his own ships, which sailed every sea. The cedars of Lebanon were the basis of much of the wealth and power of Tyre and Sidon.

Tyre itself was built upon an island. Between this and the mainland were its harbours, wherein rested the ships. Beyond was a narrow plain covered with cornfields and olive groves; and in the background were the southern buttresses of Lebanon, the hills of Upper Galilee. Though the land was very fertile it hardly yielded sufficient food for the needs of its people. Hiram was, therefore, very willing to supply Solomon with timber, and to receive in return "food for his household" (I. Kin. v. 9). The timber was dragged down to the shore, and bound together in rafts, and floated by sea along the coast to Joppa, Solomon's chosen port. The set of the sea currents, as well as of the breezes, made it easy to drift the rafts southwards, not only to Joppa, but even to Egypt. For centuries the Egyptians had imported wood from Phœnicia in this way, for Egypt was even more scantily provided with trees than Palestine.

Hiram helped Solomon in other ways (I. Kin. ix. 26, 27). Solomon tried to establish a sea-borne trade for himself, and made a port near Elath, on the

Red Sea. Notwithstanding all his wisdom, he knew very little about the sea and ships, and therefore he appealed to Hiram, who sent him sailors; for the Phœnicians were a great sea-faring people, and their ships were familiar sights along the shores of all the lands of that ancient world.

The Phœnicians were quick to learn from the various nations with whom their commerce brought them into contact. They thus became skilled in weaving wool, working brass, iron, gold and silver, and glass-blowing. Above all they were famous for dyeing cloth with a purple dye they obtained from certain shellfish common along their shores. When, therefore, Solomon found that his people were as poor in craftsmen as their land was in timber, he appealed to Hiram once more for a man cunning in all decorative arts.

Thus the Phœnicians, though their land was little, grew rich on the profits of their industry, their trade, and their exploitation of distant lands. Consequently, the kings of Israel and Judah were glad to enter into alliance with them (I. Kin. xvi. 31), for the purposes of trade, and of mutual support against common foes. Whilst this had its advantages, in the hands of Jezebel it had its disadvantages, for she considered that union of nations should be accomplished by a fusion of religions.

DAVID'S KINGDOM DIVIDED.

Already whilst Solomon was yet alive, the distant portions of his sphere of influence in the north, occupied by people alien to the Israelites, broke loose, and formed kingdoms of their own, of which Syria, with Damascus for its capital, was the chief (I. Kin. xi. 11, 14, 24). (Fig. 13, p. 74).

After his death the central portion of the king-

dom, occupied solely by the Israelites, broke into two pieces, which henceforth formed the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel respectively (I. Kin. xii. 16-20). The boundary between them was a natural one, being situated just north of the passes of Benjamin, where the tableland of Mount Judah began to break up into the hilly country of Mount Ephraim.

The kingdom of Judah was always the poorer of the two (II. Kin. xiv. 9), for the region it occupied was not naturally fertile. Such crops as it yielded were the outcome of laborious and careful cultivation. Moreover, that portion of the valley of the Jordan which lay to the east of it was not occupied by fertile plain, but by the Dead Sea. On the west the broad cornfields of Philistia were difficult of access, and were occupied by a hostile people. Again, of all the great trade routes which were the source of Solomon's wealth, only one, and that an unimportant one, passed through Judah, viz., that from north to south, from Shechem to Hebron. The Great North Road was, for the corresponding portion of its course, in the hands of the Philistines. The cross roads from Arabia and Elath to Gaza skirted the southern fringe of the kingdom only, except on those occasions when it was strong enough to maintain the control of this distant portion of the realm (Cp. I. Kin. xxii. 48, 49; II. Kin. xiv. 22).

The kingdom of Israel, on the other hand, was just as rich naturally as Judah was poor. Extending as it did from Bethel on the south to beyond the Sea of Galilee on the north, it included not only the fertile upland valleys of Mount Ephraim, but also the broad plains of Sharon and Esdraelon. Thus, except in times of drought (I. Kin. xviii. 5), Israel was always prosperous agriculturally. Many of the stories of Israel are set in an agricultural back-

ground: Elisha is ploughing when Elijah calls him (I. Kin. xix. 19), Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard (I. Kin. xxi.), the Shunammite's little child plays in the harvest field (II. Kin. iv. 18, 19).

With such natural advantages as these, the kingdom of Israel was of necessity prosperous. But to these advantages must be added yet another—the Great North Road, with its branches, passed through the heart of it. Only when its rulers were weak, and its Syrian enemies were strong, did it lose control of this road (II. Kin. x. 32). Usually, however, its kings were strong enough to maintain control, and at times to extend the boundaries of the kingdom to include even Judah (II. Kin. xiv. 24, 25).

When the kingdom of Israel was first established, Shechem was the capital (I. Kin. xii. 25), but in the reign of Elah (I. Kin. xvi. 8) the centre of the government was shifted to Tirzah. Omri subsequently moved it to Samaria, which stood upon a hill in the midst of a small plain, and could therefore be easily fortified (I. Kin. xvi. 24). The position was such a strong one that even the most powerful invaders could capture it only after prolonged siege (II. Kin. vi. 25; xvii. 5).

Israel's position and consequent prosperity brought to bear upon her two influences which retarded her religious development. The one was the luxurious living of the wealthy, accompanied by oppression of the poor (Amos ii. 6, 7; vi. 4, 5). The other was the free intercourse and mixture with foreign peoples, and consequent tolerance of idolatrous practices even in the worship of Jehovah (I. Kin. xii. 28). The scene of Elijah's epic struggle for purity of religious life was placed in Israel.

Judah's poverty and isolation on the other hand had the reverse effect. Though she was far behind Israel in political influence and commercial pros-

perity, her religious life was purer, and her worship of Jehovah less tainted, until she, in spite of prophets' warnings, entered into alliance with (Cp. II. Chron. xxxvi. 14) adjoining nations. As judged by the standards of later days, the kings of Judah as a whole "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," but the kings of Israel frequently did that "which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

DAMASCUS.

The prophet Ezekiel cries saying, "Say unto Tyre, O thou that dwellest at the entry of the sea, which art the merchant of the peoples unto many isles . . . Damascus was thy merchant for the multitude of thy handyworks (Ezek. xxvii. 3, 18). These two cities, thus so closely linked together in commerce and separated from one another by a distance of less than seventy miles, presented a striking contrast to one another. Tyre was on an island of the sea, with a background of cornfields, olive groves and wooded mountain slopes. Damascus was in an oasis, and surrounded by desert.

The mountains which protected and enriched Tyre and the Land of Cedars exercised the reverse influence on Damascus, and on the kingdom of Syria of which it was the capital. They robbed the sea-borne breezes of their rain, so that the great Syrian desert encroached even upon their lower slopes. They left Syria open to the invading hordes from the desert, or from the lands beyond the Euphrates.

In spite of all these disadvantages, Damascus, as a city of importance, outlasted Tyre. From the time when Abram pursued the five kings unto "Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus" (Gen. xiv. 15), until the night when Paul was lowered from the wall in a basket (Acts ix. 25), Damascus

and Syria are mentioned repeatedly in the Bible story. When Naaman (II. Kin. v. 12) was told to wash in the muddy Jordan he exclaimed, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" He was justly proud of his native rivers, for without them Damascus, which stands upon the Abana, could never have existed. This river draws the major part of its waters from a large spring, which issues from a cave among the Anti-Lebanons. With almost its full strength, it strikes out from the foot of the mountains, across a rocky desert plateau, and flows along the floor of a deep and narrow gorge. Suddenly the plateau ends in a cliff, and the gorge opens out on to a plain. No longer hemmed in, the river breaks into seven streams, which spread fanwise, fertilising what would otherwise be a sterile desert, and filling the city with spurting fountains.

Furnished with abundance of water, not only from the Abana but also from the Pharpar further south, and from innumerable wells sunk in the sodden ground, the natives cultivated the soil around the city, and covered an oasis of one hundred and fifty square miles with orchards and gardens, vineyards, fig-trees and pomegranates. To the Arab, accustomed to gaze only on the tawny desert, Damascus is the reflection of Paradise.

What Gaza was to the traveller going down to Egypt, and just about to cross the desert of Sinai, Damascus was to those who, coming up from Egypt and Canaan and Tyre, were just about to cross the Syrian Desert. But whereas only one main caravan route passed through Gaza, a considerable number converged on Damascus from all directions—Egypt, Canaan, Tyre, Central Arabia, Babylonia, Assyria, Haran, and from the mysterious land of the Hittites to the north.

DAVID'S CITY.

Among the cities in the uplands of Judah, one resisted every assault of the Israelites until as late as the time of David (II. Sam. v. 7). This city was Jerusalem. Its prolonged resistance was due to the remarkable military strength of its natural position.

Jerusalem was situated at a level of about two thousand four hundred feet above the sea, and a little to the east of the slightly higher ground which makes the watershed of the Judæan table-land, and along which the high road from Shechem to Hebron ran. From this the plateau slopes eastwards, and is cut up by many valleys and gorges leading down to the Jordan.

FIG. 16. MAP OF THE SITE OF JERUSALEM AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

Two of these valleys, the Valley of Hinnom on the west and south, and that of the Kedron one the east, enclose the site of the city. The area of this small piece of the plateau is only about half a square mile. It is over-looked on all sides by the hills across the valleys, except where the two streams unite at the south-eastern corner. Through this gap in the hills around, the view extends across

the Jordan valley to the mountains of Moab, and beyond.

The site was open to attack only on the north, where no deep depression cut it off from the rest of the tableland. On the west, south and east it was protected by steep rugged slopes, descending three hundred feet into the adjoining valleys.

The southern end of the site was divided unequally into a large western and a small eastern portion by an insignificant but important little valley, the Tyropœan. This ran parallel to the Kedron, and isolated a spur-like eastern portion.

Solomon erected his palace and temple on the higher ground (II. Chron. iii. 1) to the north of the eastern spur. Either he or later kings built a wall across the mouth of the Tyropœan valley, and along the brow of the western hill, which overlooked the valley of Hinnom; and across the more level ground on the northern side of the city, which was thus greatly extended. In later days the north was the only direction in which the city could grow; in all other directions it was hemmed in by valleys. Consequently later walls were erected further and further north.

With the growth of the city the question of water-supply repeatedly became urgent. In addition to each house having its own rock-hewn cistern, for storing the winter rains, a pool was dug out in the floor of the Tyropœan valley, and into this much of the rain which fell on the city could drain. Another pool, the pool of Siloam, was dug close to this one, and was supplied with water brought along a tunnel from the spring (II. Kin. xx. 20). Other pools or reservoirs were made some distance away, and the waters were brought to the city by conduits.

Such then was the position of Jerusalem, a city hidden away in the middle of its little mountain

kingdom. As compared with adjoining lands and their cities, barrenness and poverty were its lot; they were also its protection. The Assyrian with his hosts from the north overran one little kingdom after another on the Syrian land bridge, Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, Samaria, and desired only to push on to Egypt. Jerusalem offered no temptation to him. In quietness and confidence lay her strength (Is. xxx. 15). But the politicians, despite the advice of Isaiah, thought otherwise, and acted accordingly. Sennacherib came up against it and would have destroyed it had not a great calamity befallen the main body of his army (II. Kin. xix. 35, 36). Nevertheless, a century later, Nebuchadnezzar came and captured the city, broke down its walls, destroyed its temple, and carried its people captive into Babylon (II. Kin. 25).

In this desolate state the city remained until the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, who rebuilt the temple and restored its walls.

Four centuries passed by, crowded with stirring events. During that time the religion, of which the Temple and Jerusalem were the centres and the symbols, won its way, as the loftiest of religions, into all the cities of the world (Cp. Acts ii. 9). Then came Jesus, but Him they crucified, at a spot somewhere beyond the northern wall.

PART II.

SECTION 6.

The Later Civilisations.

AROUND THE ÆGEAN SEA.

THE lands of the great nations of the Old Testament—Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria—were separated from one another mainly by great stretches of desert, and the chief means of intercommunication were camels and caravans. As these nations waned in power their place was taken in history by others, to whom the sea was as natural a highway as the land.

Already, in Old Testament times, Phœnicians had built ships that could go long voyages, and had learnt to be at home upon the waters. At the time when the pageant of Old Testament story was hastening to a close there had come into being another sea-faring people, who competed with the Phœnicians for supremacy on the sea. These were the Greeks, and their home was the Ægean Sea (Cp. Javan, Gen. x. 2; I. Chron. i. 5-7; Is. lxvi. 19).

The Ægean Sea, though a part of the Mediterranean, is partially shut off from it by the island of Crete. It is bounded on all other sides by land, on the west by Greece, on the north by Macedonia and Thrace, and on the east by Asia, now called Asia Minor. This sea is quite unlike any other portion of the Mediterranean, for its shores are deeply indented, and its surface is dotted with numerous islands.

These Ægean lands are all mountainous, with valleys broadening here and there into fertile plains of small extent. In far distant ages this sea did not exist; it was wholly land. But the time came when the land sank below the level of the sea. The top-

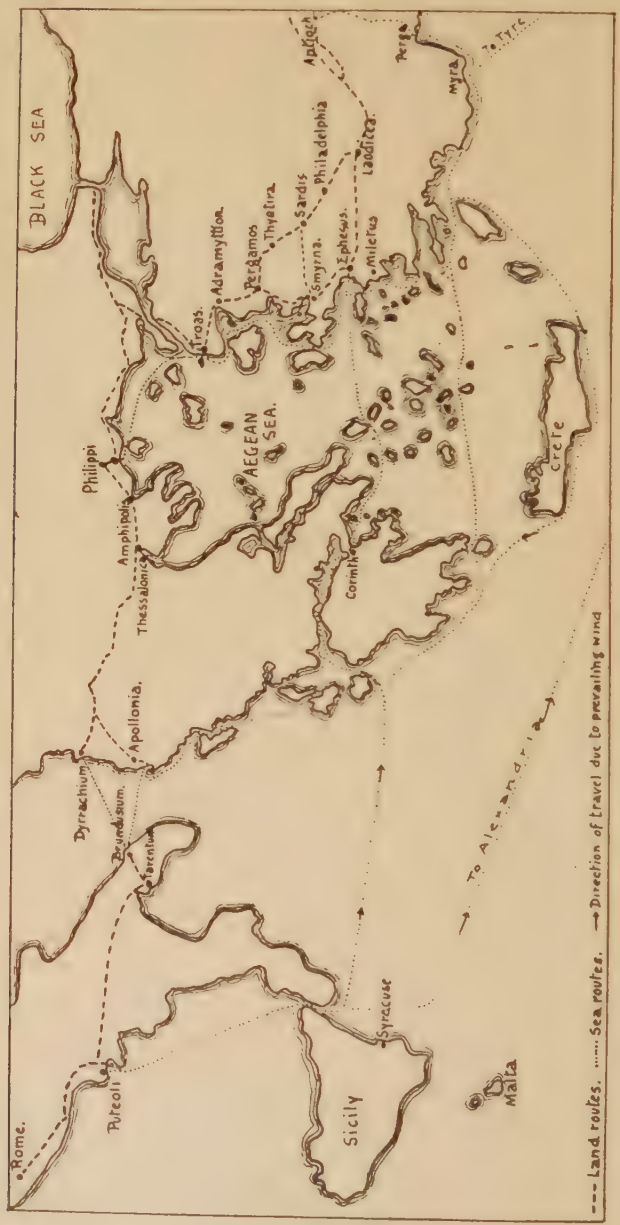

FIG. 17. GREECE AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

most portions of the mountains remained above the water level, and formed the numerous islands and projecting promontories already mentioned. The plains and valleys became the open sea and those deep inlets which bite into its shores. Into these inlets flowed the rivers from the uplands; and brought so much mud and silt that there was formed at the head of each a flat stretch of country with fertile soil, continuous with that of the valley along which the river had flowed.

The climate of the whole region was warm and very pleasant. By reason of the varied character of the surface, great differences of climate existed between places situated quite close to one another.

In the days when the Patriarchs of Israel were but sojourners in the Promised Land, another race had become settled in the fertile plains and valleys of Crete and Greece. No sooner was one valley well peopled and cultivated than some roving spirits went forth in search of other homes. The mountains on either side and in the back country did not attract them, but across the waters they saw other lands, so they built boats and launched forth. Thus new colonies grew up upon the islands and on the opposite shores of Asia.

Each colony was separated from its neighbours by sea and by mountains. Communication between them being therefore difficult it encouraged the development of a sturdy independence. Thus there grew up on the islands, and in the small plains and valleys around the Ægean, a number of cities, each controlling its own little region. These were self-governing and independent; they worshipped their own gods, and developed their own industries and manufactures.

The cities traded freely with one another, and for them the sea became the chief highway for com-

mercial intercourse. Their ships did not, however, keep within the bounds of the Ægean, but sailed forth into the Mediterranean and disputed with Tyre and Sidon for commercial supremacy. Towards the close of Old Testament times they had become a people known even in far distant lands (Ezek. xxvii. 13, 19; Joel iii. 6). They were a more highly gifted people than any that had existed before them, and their art and literature have never been surpassed.

Separated as they were from one another in government and position, these cities offered a tempting bait to the aggressive Persian empire founded by Cyrus. But for purposes of war they united with one another, and under Alexander the Great they extended their power and their culture over the whole of the Old Testament lands and beyond (I. Maccabees i. 1-9).

Their methods of empire-building presented a striking contrast to those of earlier civilisations. They did not lay waste lands or destroy cities, or carry people away into captivity wholesale. On the contrary, they sought to spread the benefits of their civilisation far and wide. They carried on the policy of colonisation, by which they had themselves grown to power. They erected wonderful cities everywhere, and peopled them from their own lands.

Though their imperial power passed into other hands, the influence of their civilisation never ceased, and is with us still.

AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN.

The Greek dominion reached its maturity and declined in the period between the Testaments. In the opening scenes of the gospels the iron grip of another and greater world-power makes itself felt. "And it came to pass in those days that there went

out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed" (Luke. ii. 1). That power had its home not in many cities but in one—Rome.

Rome grew up near to the river Tiber, which forms a natural dividing line between the northern and southern portions of the Italian peninsula. This peninsula projects far into the Mediterranean, and with the island of Sicily makes a land bridge, which almost cuts this sea in two. On the island and the southern end of the peninsula Greek civilisation had established itself, and was well protected by the sea; but the northern end, being joined to the continent of Europe, was subject at any period to an invasion from the savage and semi-savage hordes of the mainland.

Rome lay on the frontier between these two portions, and thus even in her earlier days stood guard over civilisation. Military efficiency, backed by a stern sense of duty to the State on the part of her citizens, was essential to her existence. It was, however, as much by wise diplomacy as by this efficiency that she bound to herself the other cities and peoples of Italy.

For a period of many years she was engaged in a life and death struggle with Carthage, a power of Phœnician origin which was situated on the coast of Africa over against Sicily. In the end Rome was victorious, and thus gained supreme control over the whole of the western Mediterranean.

Circumstances of less urgency led Rome to extend her sway over the lands around the eastern Mediterranean also. In doing so she did not treat the civilisation of the Greeks as a thing to be destroyed; on the contrary, she learnt what she could from it, and shielded it from the aggression of other foes. Thus her empire came to encircle the Mediterranean.

When the New Testament opens, the whole of this great Empire was in the hands of one man, Augustus Cæsar. He and his successors (Luke ii. 1; iii. 1; Acts xi. 28) were responsible for the legal (Acts xxv. 10, 11; John xix. 12), financial (Matt. xxii. 17-19), and military affairs of the empire.

Even as early as Paul's life-time there were people employed in the imperial palace who had accepted Christianity (Philip. iv. 22).

For the effective control and defence of the empire, as well as for the encouragement of commerce, easy communication was essential. To secure this the seas were cleared of pirates, and on land a system of finely made roads was established, encircling the Mediterranean, and radiating inland from its shores. Along these roads and across these seas there poured the tribute and trade of all lands into the coffers and markets of Rome: "merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyinewood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men" (Rev. xviii. 12, 13).

Her soldiers on the frontiers held back all would-be invaders of the Empire, so that for a great many years peace reigned within its borders, and the arts of peace flourished. Travelling was safer, swifter, and more comfortable then than it was in many of the same lands even at the end of the nineteenth century.

Thus all the conditions were favourable to the rapid spread of the "good news."

PART II.

SECTION 7.

The Widening Way.

NAZARETH.

AND Jesus "went down with them and came to Nazareth" (Luke ii. 51), a boy of twelve. There he had spent his childhood, there he spent his youth, and grew to manhood. At the age of thirty (Luke iii. 23) he moved to Capernaum (Matt. iv. 13) which became the centre of many of his activities. Though Capernaum played such an important part in his early ministry, it was at Nazareth that his mind became stored with the pictures of everyday life and customs of the people, with which he enriched his teaching. These pictures supply almost the only glimpses of his life during those twenty-eight years in Nazareth.

To-day all that remains of Nazareth itself as Jesus knew it is the spring or well of "living" water, whence all the townsfolk of the "city" (Matt. ii. 23) drew their daily supply of water. To that same spring Jesus must often have gone as a little boy with his mother. He must often have stood and listened to her as she talked to the other women, and gleaned the news of the day. When her turn came she filled her pitcher, and lifting it with care, balanced it on her head. Walking home, they would pass through the market place, and he would linger to watch other children at play, or sometimes even join with them in the game (Matt. xi. 17).

Arrived at home, Mary and her neighbour help one another with the long and heavy task of grinding corn for the daily baking (Matt. vi. 11). The two sit opposite to one another (Matt. xxiv. 41), with the heavy grindstone between. Thus they work for

several hours. From the meal thus ground she takes three pecks, and hides in it a piece of leaven (Matt. xiii. 33) until the whole is leavened. A big baking that, but then it was a big family (Matt. xiii. 55, 56). Meanwhile, perhaps, it is her turn to heat the public oven, an erection like a small mud hut. Into it she casts dry grass and flowers for fuel (Matt. vi. 30).

Whilst all this is going on Joseph, or, in later years, Jesus, is busy in the carpenter's shop (Mark vi. 3). Remarkably enough this employment, which must have occupied much of his time, is not reflected in his sayings (with the possible exception of Matt. vii. 3-5), perhaps other things fascinated him more.

In spring-time he delighted to wander beyond the outskirts of the city, past the houses of the rich, with their many servants and great households (Matt. xxiv. 45), to the cornfields (Matt. xiii. 24), where the men were at work (Matt. xxiv. 40), charmed every time at the changes which had taken place since he last passed by, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear" (Mark iv. 28). In this field he notes the cleanness of the crop, in that the abundance of the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30).

Then, too, there were the vineyards, with their fences, wine vats, watch towers (Matt. xxi. 33), and scattered fig trees sending forth their tender shoots (Matt. xxiv. 32). Later on in the season he perhaps helped with the grape harvest (Luke vi. 44), the pressing of the grapes, and the filling of the bottles for fermenting juice (Matt. ix. 17).

No doubt many of the walks were in the early morning, when the foxes might be seen slinking back to their holes, and the birds were waking from their slumbers (Matt. viii. 20). Then the shepherds came forth with their flocks, first dividing the goats from the sheep (Matt. xxv. 32); the one to go to the scantier and more distant pastures, the other to saunter

to the richer fields, where the grasses and the lilies grew (Matt. vi. 28).

Early and late he studied the sky (Matt. xvi. 2, 3), the winds and clouds (Luke xii. 54, 55). He watched the drought of summer break up in rolling thunderstorms, he saw the dried-up water-channels fill rapidly and become raging torrents, sweeping all before them (Matt. vii. 26).

All these and many other allusions supply a vivid picture of Nazareth, a prosperous city lying in a broad fertile valley enclosed by hills. Beyond those hills, and within easy walking distance, lay the great highways of the nations (Fig. 18, p. 117). To the south lay the plain of Esdraelon, across which caravans and merchants wended their way continually. The hills on the north overlooked a broad deep valley along which ran the great highway from Damascus to the important seaport, Ptolemais.

Along this came travellers, kings, and emperors, rich householders going to far countries (Matt. xxv. 14); along it came the merchant seeking goodly pearls (Matt. xiii. 45); along it the prodigal son went jauntily to waste his living in the licentious seaport cities of the coast (Luke xv. 13).

Nazareth was no secluded spot, it lay in the meshes of a close network of roads, along which came people from east and west, from north and south (Luke xiii. 29). Before the eyes of him who lived in it there passed in deed and truth the "kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. iv. 8).

THE SEA AND CITY OF CAPERNAUM.

Some of the disciples were fishermen, and consequently boats are a familiar feature in the Gospel stories. Two sizes of boat are mentioned: a larger one capable of holding as many as seven men, in

addition to the fish they caught, and a smaller one which was attached to the stern, and was useful for the purpose of extending the nets in the water (John xxi. 3, 8).

Round two such boats many happy memories clustered. Often had the Master sailed in the large one, along with his disciples. In it he sat and taught the multitude beside the shore. There, on the cushion in the stern he had slept while the wind came howling down from the hills, and lashed the sea into fury (Mark iv. 36-39). Then, too, the little boat was useful at least once, as a means of escape from the thronging crowds (Mark iii. 9).

Scores of similar ships, with their little boats, are to be seen rocking on the water (Cp. John vi. 24), for the lake is rich in fish, and fishing is an important and prosperous industry. Those fish which are not consumed in the adjoining towns are pickled, and exported in great quantities to Jerusalem, and to far distant places in this ancient world.

Beyond the ships are the shores, which may be seen all round this lake or inland sea, for it is only a little one. From the point where the Jordan enters it to where it leaves is a distance of only thirteen miles. At these ends it is bordered by a plain, the plain of the Jordan valley. From east to west the greatest distance is only eight miles. On either side the shore passes up rapidly to the hills, except along the northern half of the western side. Here, for a stretch of four miles, the hills recede, and leave a luxuriant plain, watered by four streams. This is the plain of Gennesaret, and on it by the sea stood Capernaum. There were a number of other cities (Cp. Matt. iv. 25) spread along the shores of the lake, but Capernaum is the richest in fragrant memories. Here was the Master's adopted home. Here the diseased, the blind, halt, maimed, having possibly

tried the world-famed hot-springs of Tiberias (six miles further along the coast), and found them to fail, came to try their only hope.

Capernaum was no mean city. Here lived a royal official, whose son lay at the point of death (John iv. 46). Here, also, was stationed an army captain with his band of well-disciplined soldiers (Matt. viii. 9). These were not Jewish soldiers, for Judah and Israel had long ceased to be independent kingdoms. They were the soldiers of that new power which since the days of Isaiah and Daniel had risen to be

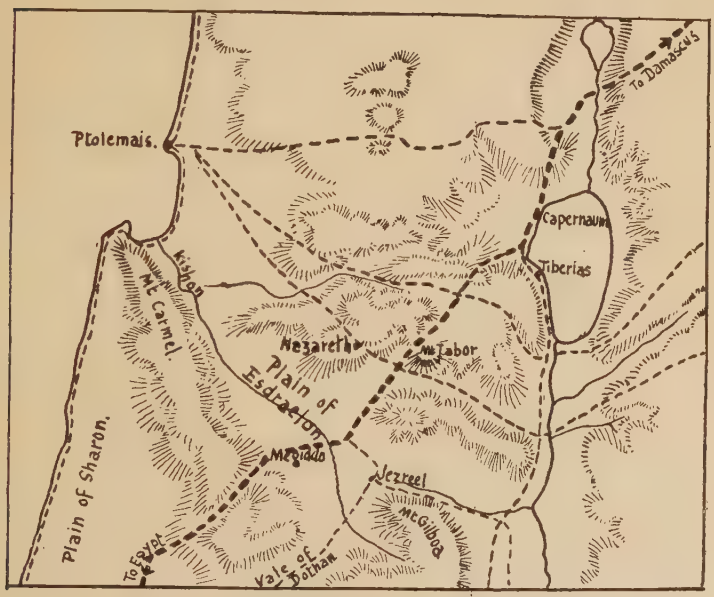

FIG. 18. MAP OF THE GALILEAN GATE.

the mightiest power on earth. That power was Rome, whose empire was so wonderfully governed that within its far-flung frontiers peace universal reigned.

Here in Capernaum Matthew had his office,

and collected taxes (Luke v. 27-29). He was not the only tax-collector in the city and neighbourhood, for at the great banquet he gave in honour of Jesus many tax-collectors were present (Cp. ver. 29). These all found ample employment in the city, for through it there passed a great volume of the commerce which, coming from all directions, converged upon the Galilean gateway, across the Jordan valley and the Syrian Mountains.

In this gateway there existed a complex network of roads. Chief of these was the great road between Damascus and Egypt. After crossing the Jordan it came southwards to the Sea of Galilee, and skirted its shores for several miles. Capernaum was situated somewhere upon this short stretch by the sea. A minor branch of the road continued along the shore to the imperial city of Tiberias, and thence down the Jordan valley. The main road, however, left the shores, and, passing up one of the valleys whose waters fertilise the plain of Gennesaret, gained the summit of the Mount of Beatitudes. Traversing the western shoulder of Mount Tabor, it descended to Esdraelon and to Egypt.

In New Testament times an important seaport, Ptolemaïs, stood on the Mediterranean shores, north of Carmel. Upon this port several roads from the east converged, and, on the way, crossed the road from Damascus to Egypt. One of these runs near to Nazareth.

Thus, like his early life, the early ministry of Jesus was not spent in an out-of-the-way corner (Cp. Acts xxvi. 26), but close to the main arteries of civilised life. Hence his difficulty was not in finding but in escaping from the thronging multitudes.

ANTIOCH.

Whilst Saul was pursuing Christians along the highway to Damascus, others were fleeing to yet more distant places, and among these was Antioch (Acts xi. 20). Here the fugitives preached the Gospel with such success that a great many people believed.

Meanwhile, Saul also became a believer. After a period of retirement he was brought by Barnabas to Antioch, which was henceforth his headquarters. It was from this city that Paul set forth upon each of his three great missionary journeys (Acts xiii. 4; xv. 35, 36; xviii. 22, 23).

Antioch plays the part in the New Testament world that Damascus played in that of the Old Testament. The importance of its position is illustrated by the part played by Aleppo, a few miles inland from Antioch, during the late Great War. Here the Turks had their headquarters for the armies which were fighting against the British in Mesopotamia and in Palestine. In a similar manner, Antioch was situated at the junction of three great lines of communication. One went south through Palestine to Egypt. The second ran east, and along it flowed merchandise to and from Babylonia, Persia, India, and even China. These two great lines of traffic which thus radiated from Antioch connected it with the seats of the great civilisations of the Old Testament. The third passed on both by sea and land to those great centres of civilisation in the west which dominated the New Testament world.

No better centre for missionary effort could have been used by Paul. Merely to live and preach at Antioch was a great missionary enterprise, for here merchants, travellers, pleasure-seekers gathered from

all parts of the world. When the Roman Emperor travelled east, he made Antioch his centre. The Roman governor of the region from the Taurus to the Red Sea was also stationed here.

Third after Rome in point of size, Antioch was one of the greatest cities of the empire. Alexandria and Athens alone were her rivals in importance. But whilst Athens was given over to art and philosophy, and Alexandria to commerce and learning, Antioch excelled in pleasure-seeking. He who scored success as an entertainer in her theatres became a star throughout the Empire. A frivolous people, given to jesting at all and sundry, from the Emperor on the throne to these followers of Jesus, whom they nicknamed Christians (Acts xi. 26).

The natural situation of the city was one of great beauty. It lay on the Orontes, with the wooded slopes of the mountains rising behind it. Even to-day, neglected though it has been, the whole country-side blooms like a garden.

The city itself was as magnificent as any in the Empire, and its public buildings were not to be surpassed elsewhere. Its main street was furnished for four and a half miles with colonnaded covered ways, which provided the foot passenger with shelter alike from the winter rain and the heat and glare of summer. Antioch was unique among ancient cities in that its streets were lighted in the evening, so that pleasure and work might be pursued into the night.

Fourteen miles down the river lay the sea. Here a seaport, Seleucia, was made for Antioch. The natural conditions of the site, however, prevented it from becoming a great port; consequently sea-borne traffic from the city never approached the land-borne in importance. Nevertheless, it was from Seleucia that Paul set forth upon his first journey to Cyprus,

the mountain peaks of which could be seen across the waters.

EPHESUS.

And Paul "came to Ephesus" (Acts xix. 1). After teaching the Jews in the synagogue for three months (ver. 8), he turned his attention to the Gentiles, and preached to them "for the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia (ver. 10) heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (ver. 10).

Paul found Ephesus an even better centre (I. Cor. xvi. 8, 9) than Antioch for aggressive work, for here Christianity could confront the religion of that ancient world in one of its chief citadels (Acts xix. 27). Ephesus was the keeper of the Temple of Diana (Acts xix. 35), within whose precincts was the hideous fetish, the worship of which gave freedom of action to all that was vile in human nature, and to all that tended to subvert the human intelligence (Acts xix. 13, 18). Ephesus was only one, though the chief, of a great number of cities in Asia, the greatest industrial province of the Roman Empire. To Ephesus came pilgrims, and therefore merchants, from all these cities, and consequently it was also a great centre of commerce and industry.

Ephesus was situated on the southern side of the inlet into which the river Cayster flowed. Immediately behind it lay the mountains, and in front of it, to the north, there had at one time been the open waters of the gulf. At the present day the process of silting carried on by the river has converted this gulf into a plain, and carried the actual shore line so far towards the open sea that Ephesus is now some miles inland. In St. Paul's day the shore line had not yet been pushed quite beyond the city, so that

its harbour could still be entered by ships, and was still of considerable importance. Roman governors on their way from Rome to the province of Asia usually landed at Ephesus.

To this harbour came ships with merchandise from the Syrian coast, and with corn from Egypt.

Paul, standing on deck, as the vessel entered the harbour from the west, would see the city extended along the lower slopes of hills to the right of and in front of him. On either side of the harbour were the buildings where the great exporting and importing houses had their stately offices.

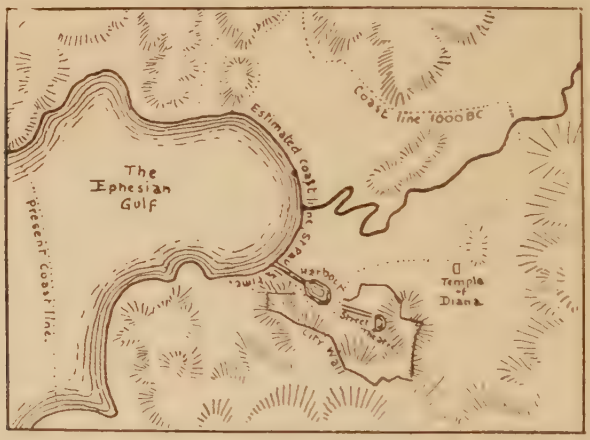

FIG. 19. MAP OF EPHESUS AND ENVIRONS AT THE TIME OF PAUL'S VISIT.

Running up from the harbour to the theatre, situated towards the upper end of the city, was a long straight street. Alongside of this were magnificent buildings, in some of which no doubt the guilds of craftsmen (Acts xix. 24, 25) of the city had their headquarters. It was along this street that Demetrius, followed by associates of his own and in kindred crafts, rushed, a disorderly mob, to hold a public

meeting in the large theatre. The whole scene is one which could have been enacted only in a city which teemed with a varied industrial and highly skilled population. It was among these crowds of craftsmen and city toilers, whose work time and leisure were largely devoted to Diana, that Paul preached for the space of two years with such excellent results.

The summit of the hill behind the theatre overlooked a small plain on the other side. Across this two roads ran. The one turning northwards led to the cities of the coast and province of Asia. The other trending southwards was part of an important trunk route from Rome, by way of Corinth, to the East. In the centre of the plain rose the magnificent temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world, erected by the contributions of money and jewellery collected from all parts of the province.

In slightly later days, when Christian churches had been established in many of the Asian cities, there grew up between them a well-organised system of rapid and frequent communication. The chief centres of this system were situated on a triangle of roads (Fig. 17, p. 106), with Ephesus, Pergamos, and Laodicea at its western, northern and eastern corners respectively. The base of this triangle was merely a part of a main route from the East to Ephesus, and so across the sea to Rome. Near Laodicea this road forked and sent a branch north-westwards to Pergamos, and thence to form the almost completely overland route to Rome, which passed through Philippi and Thessalonica. This branch was joined at Pergamos by a coast road from Ephesus. When John upon the isle of Patmos sent the Revelation to the Churches in Asia (Rev. i. 4), his messenger landed at Ephesus. Thence he passed rapidly along the two northern sides of the triangle to Smyrna and

Pergamos; to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. From these centres the message was handed on with all speed to the churches in the adjoining districts.

THE PATHS OF THE SEA.

The account of St. Paul's last voyage towards Jerusalem opens with the words "And we sailed away" (Acts xx. 6) from Philippi to Troas (Fig. 17, p. 106). Here Paul left his companions on board, and walked on foot to Assos, where they picked him up once more (ver. 13). They continued the voyage, calling first at one port and then another, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus (ver. 14, 15), Cos, Rhodes, Patara (Ch. xxi. 1). Thus the vessel pursued a looping course along the coast, and each loop occupied one day. It was a small trading vessel, hugging the coast and taking advantage of the daily breezes which blew during the summer-time. Each morning the sailors were astir early, ready to catch the first breezes from the north. Gradually the wind strengthened, and with its help they worked their way to and gained another harbour before sunset, when it became a calm.

At Patara the travellers found a larger vessel (Ch. xxi. 2) about to venture across the open sea to the Phœnician coast. No doubt the smaller vessel would get to the same point eventually, but would take a much longer time, and so they changed ships. Once clear of the coast, their sails caught the strong westerly wind which usually blew across the open sea. After passing Cyprus on the left, they speedily reached Tyre. Here the vessel stayed for a week, loading and unloading merchandise (ver. 3, 4). This finished, it continued its voyage southwards, calling at various ports, Ptolemais and Cæsarea, to carry on

further trading. At Cæsarea Paul and his company disembarked (ver. 8).

The vessels used by Paul on this journey were only two out of a great multitude, which, except during the winter months, traded systematically along the coasts of the Ægean and of the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

It was from Cæsarea that Paul set forth upon the last of his voyages of which there is any record. The vessel was one going in the opposite direction to that described above; it was going to the "places on the coast of Asia" (Ch. xxvii. 2), arriving ultimately at Adramytium, in the region of Troas. At Myra (ver. 5, 6) Paul and his fellow-travellers changed vessels. Had they not done this, but remained on board the Adramyttian vessel, they would probably have landed at Troas or at Thessalonica, and have taken the overland route through Macedonia to Rome. This would really have been the wiser course, for winter was coming on, bringing storms which most ancient sailors feared to face. It was, indeed, the custom at the end of October or beginning of November to go into winter quarters (Ch. xxvii. 12; xxviii. 11). But the centurion was in a hurry, and, being willing to run the risk, he transshipped the whole of his company to a large vessel that was going direct to Rome. This ship had come from Alexandria, laden with corn (Ch. xxvii. 38); Egypt was one of the granaries of Rome, and her harvests were transported in fleets of government ships. From Rome to Alexandria these vessels, after leaving the south of Italy, could make a straight course for their destination, wafted by the prevailing westerly winds. On the return journey, these same winds forced them to sail due north to the coast of Asia Minor, to the port of Myra.

Cornships were by no means tiny vessels. This

particular one, for example, carried, in addition to its cargo, a considerable number of passengers (v. 37). "The Twin Brothers" in which the journey was finished (Ch. xxviii. 11) was also a large vessel, for in addition to its own cargo and passengers it was able to accommodate all of the shipwrecked brethren.

Paul landed at Puteoli, with its great warehouses and offices belonging to the shipping houses of all the great seaports of the Mediterranean, and after seven days with the brethren passed on by road to Rome.

THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH.

As the work of his earlier years advanced, Paul developed an ambition to preach the Gospel at Rome also (Rom. i. 15). For Rome was the first city of that Empire which had eclipsed all its predecessors. No matter where he went or preached, he must constantly have met merchants, travellers, and officials on their way to and from Rome.

Situated at the centre of the spider-web of communications cast over the Empire, Rome felt immediately the pulsation of every movement in the provinces. Already, before Paul arrived there, Christianity had become established in the imperial city.

Antioch and Ephesus were both important centres, but the work done in them influenced, for the most part, only the provinces in which they were situated. But to have Rome for his pulpit was to have the whole civilised, and much of the uncivilised world, for his congregation. From Rome the good news would spread to the regions around the western as well as around the eastern Mediterranean, to Spain and beyond. With the help of his favourite band of messengers, Paul at Rome kept in touch

with all the churches that had already been established.

In less than two centuries after the death of Paul, Christianity had spread to the confines of the Empire. Though, in later days, that mighty Empire ceased to be, Christianity lived on, and spread to the lands beyond its bounds. In the turmoil and disorder of the Dark Ages which followed the downfall of Rome, Christianity was the only uplifting and en-

FIG. 20. THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND ITS NATURAL BOUNDARIES.

lightening influence. Down through the centuries that influence has been ever at work, and where it has been most strongly felt, there Art, Literature, Science, Industry and Commerce have flourished, and have provided the means whereby an ever-increasing stream of preachers and missionaries has been able to carry and make known the message of messages to the darkest places of the earth.

The Sidney Press, Bedford.

Date Due

2/5			
7/5/40			
7/13/44			
6/28/45			

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

BS
630
S978 47980

AUTHOR
Swinnerton, H.H.

TITLE
Lands behind the Bible story

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	DATE RETURNED
1-10-36	PCCE Reserve (Mixed)	
1/5/38	Fraser	
2/10/38	Fraser	
6/5/40	Ross	
7/5	Ross	
6/13/44		
5/28/45		
OCT 17 '94		